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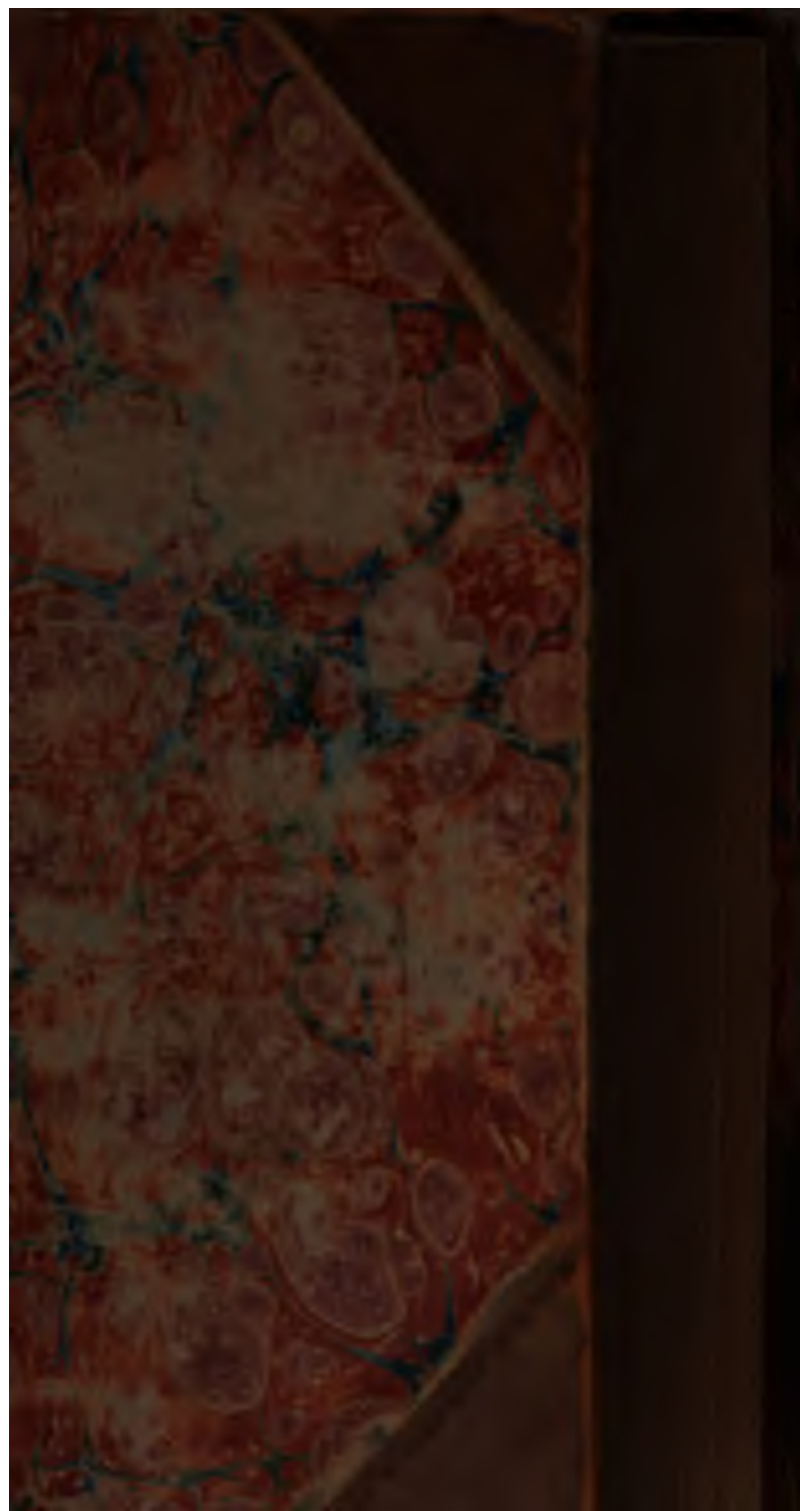
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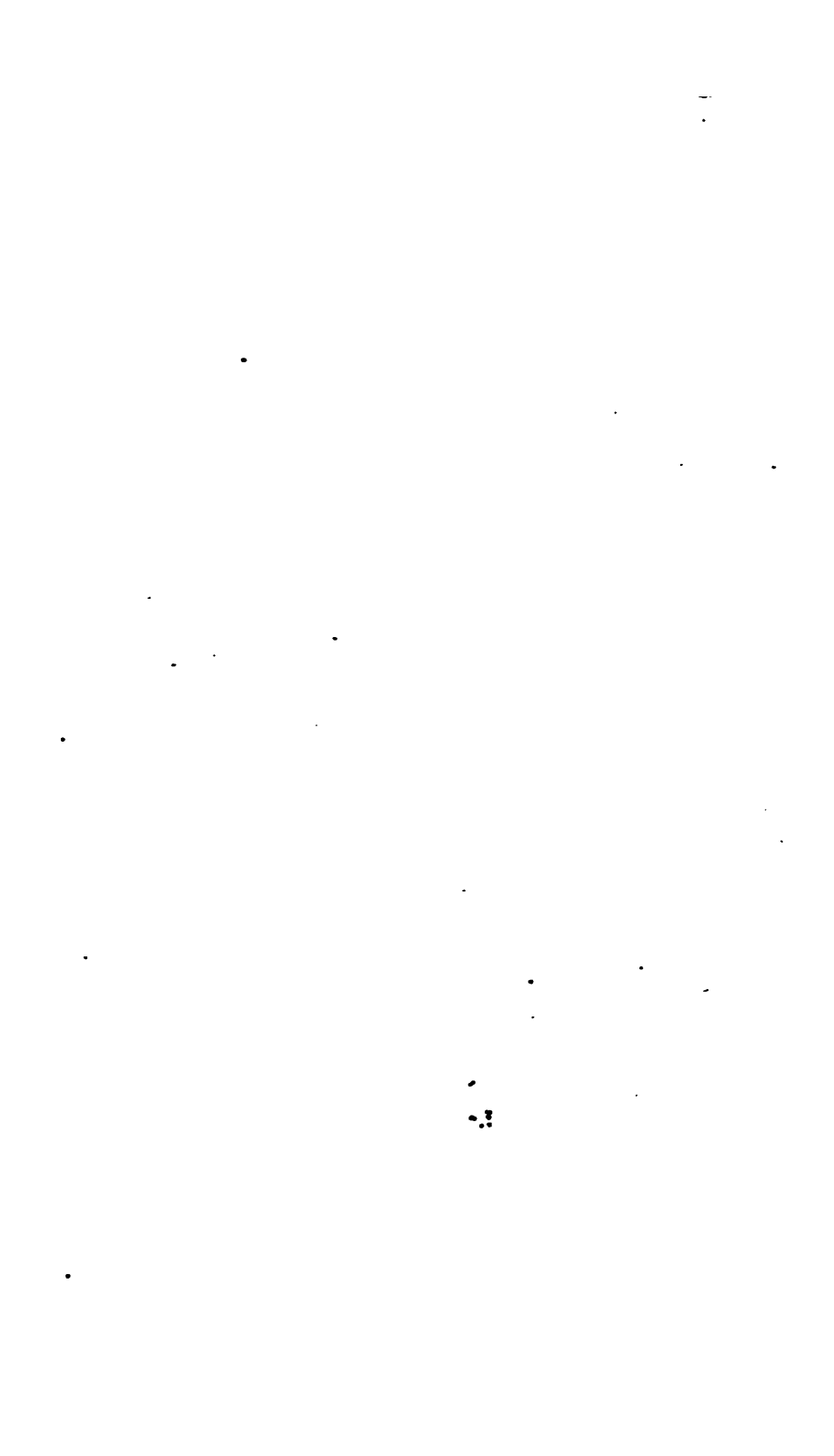




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**ROSABEL.**

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**VOL. I.**

LONDON,  
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# ROSABEL,

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BY THE AUTHORESS OF CONSTANCE.

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VOL. I.

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LONDON:

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND  
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## CHAPTER I.

“ How long shall I be patient ! Oh, how long  
Shall tender duty make me suffer wrong ! ”

SHAKESPEAR.

**IT** is now many years since parents were harsh and unjust, or children rebellious ; in these happy times, it is the children who sway, and the parents who sometimes dare to rebel : elopements from parental tyranny, and the miseries of being crossed in love or dress, are now uncommon. In times past, such things occasionally happened.

A winter's sun had set upon the leafless groves of Fairford, a village in one of our northern counties, and a starless and gloomy night had succeeded. A light or two, gleaming from some cottages of the district, might alone reassure the traveller of his approach to social warmth and shelter. But, from the principal house of the village, there streamed a blaze of unusual illumination, which threw upon the



belt of evergreens, by which it was secluded from public view, a reflection sufficient to shew that the broad-leaved laurels, and close junipers were partly clothed with wreaths of snow, whilst the lawn and bank near the house were covered with a light but universal mantle of white.

In the principal apartments within, however, dancing and music were going on, and the sounds of heartfelt merriment were heard: through all the house warmth and cheerfulness prevailed. Whilst, in the servants' hall, they drank to Master Gilbert's return home from India, and hoped that his coming back would be as merry as his parting, Martha, the old nurse, above stairs, was soberly employed in tranquillizing such young members of the family as were too juvenile to sit up late, or were weary, or who ought to be weary, with the night's gaieties. She had just finished her task;—the last unruly member of her establishment was dropping asleep, much against his will, whilst his drowsy ear could continue to catch a sound of the music from below.—Two of Martha's elder subjects pressed, with flushed cheeks, their pillows; her own spectacles were properly

placed, the fire blazing, the candle snuffed, and Martha, with a large basket of dilapidated garments before her, resigning herself to solitude in the midst of gaiety, when a low, but hasty tap was heard at the nursery door. Martha, unwilling to be disturbed, heard it once in sullen silence ; but, when the signal was repeated, she rose, and went to the door, not omitting, in her way, to give a shake to the youngest plague of her dominions ; who, now awakened, peered a large pair of bright black eyes above the coverlid. With some additional irritation at this circumstance, Martha pulled open the door, saying, as she flung it back—

“ Why can’t you come in, Sally ; the door’s not locked ?—But who’s this we have here ? ”—upon seeing a person enter with the commonplace introduction :—

“ It’s a young woman, as says she wants you, Martha.”

“ A young woman, indeed—go down stairs, Sally, and remember you are to knock next time.”

“ Miss Rosabel, dear,” pursued Martha, as she closed the door after her fellow servant ;  
“ are you mad ? ”

“ So you know me, do you, Martha ? ” answered the young visitant, in a tone between shame and mirth.

“ What’s come to you, Miss Rosabel—what’s happened to you, to run off from home such a night as this, in such a dress, and walking too ? ” continued Martha, looking down reproachfully at the snow-tracks on her nursery hearth.

“ That is not true, Martha ; for I came in a covered cart.”

“ Ah, you’re a lost one, poor dear—and always was a wild one. Have they turned you out of doors then, at last, as they did me ? It was a dark day, Miss Rosabel, that your mother died ; she little thought what her daughter was to come to.”

“ *Her* daughter will never come to any thing that she is ashamed of—will never disgrace herself, Martha,” returned the young lady, drawing herself up.

As she spoke, she took off a large coarse bonnet which she had worn, and a profusion of rich auburn curls, which hung in tresses down her back, as girls of condition long ago wore their hair, fell about her shoulders.

"And how, Martha, do you think this dress becomes me?—this bonnet I stolè from Phœbe, the scullery maid; but I left her a much better one in its place: and my gown, and cloak, and hood belong to Bridget, the dairy woman, who is the only person in my confidence. Come, Martha, don't you be so cross," she added, coaxingly.

"Then it's no bad thoughts as you have in your head, but only a trick of yours, Miss Rosabel, to run off from home for a joke, may be."

"I *could* not stay, Martha—would not stay—to be so lectured in the presence of the very servants—treated like a child—for ever in fault—for ever scolded."

"Ah! Miss Rosabel, what will your poor father say?"

"Sir John, Martha, will not miss me. Have I ever received one single proof of affection from him? Do I ever see him?—Does he not keep his children at an immeasurable distance from him—and leaves us to the self-righteous Mrs. Waldegrave, or to Aunt Alice? I declare I don't know which of the two I dislike the most."

"You should not speak so, Miss Rosabel;

and yet, it is what I have heard your mother, poor dear my lady, say many a time."

"I do believe they will all be mightily rejoiced when they hear I am gone to Aunt Evelyn's; and so they will get rid of me altogether. You can give me half of your bed, dear Martha, to-night," added Miss Fortescue, looking round, "and to-morrow, my knight of the cart is to fetch me away again;—it is only Peter, Martha, Bridget's nephew, who drives the Bridgetown errand cart, and I go in most innocent company,—with boxes, hampers, and cheeses."

"Ah! Miss Rosabel; and don't you think that poor Sir John will fret when he hears you are missing, and don't know where you are gone to?—and poor Miss Fortescue, Miss Charlotte, I mean, and Master Hubert, poor fellow, and even Mr. Philip—don't you think they'll fret about you, and have the pools dragged, and I don't know what?"

"The pools, dear Martha, are frozen; so it is impossible for any human being to drown himself in them; the ice is as thick as that about Aunt Waldegrave's heart.—Sir John is expected home in a day or two. I could not,"

she added, dashing a tear from her eye, " have left the house thus whilst he was in it. Charlotte, poor Charlotte, is wholly under the dominion of my aunts ; she is less sisterly to me than I could bear and expect ; from her I have had no sympathy. Oh ! I like the friend who looks coldly on those who look coldly on me ;—Charlotte is too prudent, too cautious for me. Hubert, poor dear Hubert, would have felt for me ; but he, you know, is at Harrow ; and Philip, who never did feel for any one, is at Oxford."

She sat down, and leaned musingly over the fire. Just then, a passage door opening, the sounds of music and of laughter broke upon the ear of the young fugitive—she sighed.

" How that reminds me of home, Martha—of home in Mama's time—often, you know, she would have the church musicians in for us, when we could get nothing better ; but now, at home, 'tis all state and form, and economy, and improvement.—I hate economy, and I never will give in to improvement—not that sort of improvement—sermons by the hour, and backboards a yard long, and every pains taken to make us as stiff as Aunt Waldegrave,

and as thin as Aunt Alice. My figure will never come up to their model of perfection," she added, throwing back her hood and cloak, and displaying a fine, elastic form, just emerging from the slightness of girlhood into womanly maturity.

"*You* were sent away, Martha, and good easy Mrs. Johnson; and in place of you the dear little twins have a dragon set over them, a creature whose very smile reminds one of grammar, and all that horrid sort of thing. How would poor mama fret, could she know how her darlings are fretted!—That child is like Howard," she continued, looking round at one of the little sleepers; "but he has not Howard's noble features—he has not Howard's blood in his veins: there's a great deal in that: is there not, Martha?"

"My dear Miss Rosabel," said Martha, "that was said more like your aunt Mrs. Waldegrave, than your aunt Mrs. Evelyn."

"It is true, Martha, that I, who am now an outcast, have nothing (no—obliged to errand boys, and scullery maids," and to old nurses, thought she) "have nothing to do with pride:—but where are you going, Martha?"

“ Dear Miss Rosabel, only to fetch you some supper, dear ; I will set it in the school room ; not a soul will see you ; and then you shall go to bed, dear, and we will see about further matters in the morning.” Thus saying, the anxious and affectionate domestic hurried away, and Rosabel was left, for a short time, to her own reflections.

On descending to the lower regions, Martha found that some suspicions of the rank and intentions of her guest had reached that sphere of curiosity. Peter, the carrier-boy, had not been altogether trust-worthy, and had whispered, to his friend, the footman, that he had conveyed a runaway young lady to see her former nurse. From the footman, the intelligence travelled to the housemaid, who communicated it to one of the young ladies, who had quitted the dancing room to repair a fracture in her dress. The news was speedily circulated through the ball room, until it reached a circle of young men, who had congregated together in the true national spirit of English fashion, between a circle of ladies and the fire-place ; having, as it seems, that amiable conviction on their minds, that the fair sex can never be



cold. There was, at the time, a pause in the dance, which some of the young gentlemen proposed to fill up by attempting to obtain a sight of the young fugitive ; but they were gravely admonished of the impropriety, and convinced of the impossibility of the attempt, by Mr. Warner, the master of the house, who assured them that, whilst under his roof, Miss Fortescue should meet with no sort of molestation.

This declaration was, of course, highly approved by the graver portion of the company, although received with some indications of disappointment by the young men ; but it was observed, that, during the next dance, Henry Warner, and Mr. Belfield, a young gentleman of fortune in the neighbourhood, stole away behind a large Japan screen, which stood in one corner of the ball room.

## CHAPTER II.

" Thus Nature gives us (let it check our pride)  
The virtue nearest to our vice allied."

POPE.

MISS FORTESCUE had finished her solitary repast in the school room, and was awaiting the return of old Martha to conduct her to her sleeping quarters ; when a sort of rustling among the trees, which partly shrouded the unshuttered window of the apartment in which she sat, attracted her notice. She raised her head, which she had rested upon her hands, and looked earnestly at the window, which was scarcely one story from the ground. Nothing, however, but a few evergreen leaves, rendered conspicuous by the heavy, but compact accumulation of snow pressing upon them, came in her view. She resigned herself again to her own reflections : the sounds of nature were no longer distinct, and all was ~~silence~~ <sup>silence</sup> admitted by stealth, and ~~man~~ <sup>man</sup>

the home of others, possibly repentance for the rash flight from discipline and restraint had some share in the sadness which overspread her countenance. Again, however, were her thoughts disturbed by a rustling noise outside the window ; and this time she saw that some unseen force had brushed off the snow which had rested upon the broad laurel leaves that had before caught her eye. A little alarmed, she turned to the door, to make the best of her way to old Martha's more secure and appropriate domicile. The door of the room was, however, locked ; for Martha, well aware of the tendency of her master's grown-up sons to mischief, was resolved that no one should intrude upon her "dear Miss Rosabel's" retreat, and had not only secured the door outside, but had taken the key with her. The young lady was therefore obliged to remain in her present state of durance ; and, being naturally of a fearless temper, she began to laugh at her own apprehensions, and resolved to make her way boldly up to the window, and investigate the cause of the noise which had disturbed her ; but she repented her temerity ; for as she advanced heroically to the window, a pair of bright eyes,

fixed upon her, met her gaze. She screamed, and caught hold of the nearest chair to support her from sinking with terror ; and her screams were converted into piercing shrieks, when the window being hastily thrown open, two young gentlemen, in full dancing costume, sprang into the apartment.

Rosabel was scarcely sixteen years of age ; a wild, and wilful, and thoughtless girl, with an imperfect education, and principles of action not as yet developed. Treated, since the death of a too indulgent mother, with the rigour which was, half a century ago, considered as the only proper method of managing servants, and children, and all other inferior animals, she deemed it a proof of heroism and spirit to run away from a house of tyranny. In a region of affection, and of indulgence, where she expected to enjoy under the roof of Mrs Evelyn, her mother's sister. But having in the most entire guilelessness of conscience a modesty of demeanour : she had no degree of pride, family pride : she was keenly alive to injury : she had never experienced others afflicts a young man.

tirely dispelled on entering the apartment: for Rosabel, as the door opened, overwhelmed by shame and fear, tacitly turned her back upon the enemy, and, leaning her head upon a chair, vouchsafed neither word nor look to those who thus intruded upon her privacy.

“There is something quite out of the common in all this,” whispered Mr. Warner in a low tone to a gentleman behind him. “Don’t you wish you could see her face?”

“I do, indeed,” was the reply.

“Hem—— Be composed, madam.”

No reply.

“A little sullen, you see; very symptomatic,” whispered Mr. Warner, aside to the gentleman near him.

Mr. Warner, it must be observed, was a magistrate, and a man of magisterial manners in his own house. He was one who pursued his vocation *con amore*. The whirlwind of contention which carried others away, was to him only a little agreeable zephyr. He excelled in the character of an umpire, and loved to exercise it, whether in a criminal prosecution, or in a domestic broil. His dignity on such occasions was proverbial; though he

sometimes sullied it, as wiser men have done, by talking too much. In the present instance, however, he felt somewhat embarrassed.

"I am happy," he said, after a few moments of profound silence all around him, "to find, madam, that you are so composed. Don't be alarmed; these things will occur with young people. But, Henry—Mr. Belfield—how came you here? Vastly well, very pretty, young gentlemen: I see how it is; you have disturbed the young lady"—casting a judicial eye at the open window, and the snow-tracks on the floor. "Upon my honour, Mr. Belfield, it is not a very agreeable thing for me to remark, that you have forced yourself into this young lady's presence in a most unbecoming way—most unbecoming."

"I am very sorry for it, I assure you, sir," said Henry Warner, looking down, whilst a smile played for a moment on his countenance. "It was a sudden thought, and has not been, I assure you, an agreeable enterprize."

He looked, shiveringly, at the window. Mr. Warner, with his accustomed stateliness, walked up to it, and closed it.

"It is very strange—I can regulate other

very intelligent. He was dressed, for the gala, in a Carmelite-coloured coat, suitable to his magisterial gravity ; a dove-coloured satin waist-coat, made deep, with flaps, according to the mode then prevalent. His black velvet breeches were set off with gold knee-bands. These were the last days of gridiron shoe-buckles : a pair of these, large and luminous, reached nearly down to the worthy magistrate's toes. His hair had been well "tormented," as it was jocularly termed, for the occasion, and was confined, behind, in one of the new-fashioned pig-tails, tightly strapped with black ribbon, and becoming narrower and narrower, until, arriving nearly to a point, it terminated in a slender curl.

"With regard to my son, and his young acquaintance, Miss Fortescue, I am no accomplice. I wipe my hands of it. Holding the prominent situation that I do, and, more especially, being a widower, and having the honour of being known to Sir John, by character, no doubt—"

He waited, in vain, for an assent.

"I have not myself the honour of personally knowing Sir John. The only public affair in which Sir John and I were ever concerned

together, was upon the occasion of his losing a horse. You have heard of it, no doubt ; for it made noise enough at the time."

" Very like, sir," said Martha, from behind ;  
 " but Miss is too young to remember that."

" However, that is nothing to the point. Sir John, I dare say, knows me, although I do not know him ; and allow me to observe, that you much remind me of your father, Miss Fortescue ;—I never saw Sir John but once, and that was at the quarter sessions. We were widowers, I think, about the same time."

" Miss Rosa favours her mother," whispered Martha, in a low tone, from behind.

" That may be true, Martha," said Mr. Warner, turning round somewhat sharply ;  
 " Miss Rosabel Fortescue may favour both her parents, the living and the defunct. However, business is business, madam," he again resumed, " and must be done. It is not for me to enquire into family dissensions, or family matters—but—"

Another pause ensued ; and the grave, discouraging manner of the young lady seemed to say : " it is not for you to enquire."

" Indeed, it would be improper," he con-



tinued, after some hesitation, "seeing that all you can urge would be ex parte evidence, and therefore by no means allowable when such respectable persons as Sir John Fortescue and Mrs. Waldegrave are concerned."

"Miss Rosa, I am sure," interposed Martha, "would say nothing but what was the truth, sir."

"Sir John, madam, I presume, knows of your absence?" said Mr. Warner, to Rosabel.

"No, sir."

"No? Then I shall deem it my especial duty to acquaint him of it, and to interdict you, Martha, from forwarding his young lady's notions of flight, under pain of a summons to answer for your conduct. My friend Captain Ashbrook lives in your neighbourhood, Miss Rosabel; and I shall depute him to make your worthy father aware of your present position within a very few hours." And, thus saying, he quitted the apartment.

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and of tempers peculiarly combustible, to the management of a husband truly disconsolate.

Mrs. Warner, on the contrary, had been a thrifty, hardy woman, whom no slight disease could have carried off. She had “looked after her children,” as it is called, to the very last moment—been up early and late, and had gone on teaching and stitching till the day before her death; and had the glory of being considered regularly worn out by duties which any servant might have done for her. Her last action was hemming a cravat for Mr. Warner. She left the reputation of having been indeed a loss to her family; and Mr. Warner enjoyed that of being a most inconsolable husband—his grief, however, was not of that uncomfortable sort which shuns observation and sympathy: it was the theme of the neighbourhood, and was suitable to a man who lived so much in public. He had been “such a pattern” when a husband; and he was now no less a pattern when a widower. His grief was always in full dress.

Sir John Fortescue’s sufferings, on the other hand, had been borne in silence and patience, and, after the first awful shock was over, were invisible, except to the solicitous and expe-

rienced eye of friendship. He had walked into the small parish church, the Sunday week after Lady Fortescue's funeral, conducting his eldest daughter to the head of the pew, her mother's former place, followed by his numerous family, some of whom were too young to know their loss: and once he had looked round at the funeral decorations of the church with unaltered eye; and the servants, and lookers on, and even his children, had wondered at his composure: but in the silent hours of the night, when others slept, Martha, the old nurse, would hear the bereaved mourner, her master, pace up and down his solitary apartment, and abandon himself to the anguish of hopeless and heartfelt grief.

Sir John Fortescue had, however, ample cause for exertion, to rouse him from the sorrow of a refined and sensitive mind—for such he possessed. He found his family affairs disordered, and his family ungovernable. A domestic democracy prevailed; each in his own place was an independent member of the community. The children were alternately slaves and rebels under this too common species of government. The charm of Lady Fortescue's

manners, her frequent ill health, the grace which she knew how to throw over the social board, her blind fondness for her children, and her candour, and sweetness of character, had all gilded over her defects of management to her husband's view. When living, he could scarcely bear to blame her, or even in thought to reproach her pernicious indulgence as the source of much irremediable mischief; when dead, he could not endure to cast a momentary reflection upon her memory, even to himself. He blamed his own negligence, and regretted that Parliamentary duties and other public affairs had drawn him too frequently away from home. He resolved to relinquish all such occupations as would interfere with his duty to his family; and he determined to resort to aid upon which he could rely, to assist him in the controul of his younger children.

Immediately after Lady Fortescue's death, Mrs. Evelyn, her only sister, had arrived at Hales Hall, to take a temporary charge of the family: but her situation in life prevented her from continuing to preside over her unruly young relatives. She had married, at the age of thirty, a clergyman of excellent character,

but of valetudinarian habits ; and, although their union had not been blessed with children, yet the care of Mr. Evelyn's health, comforts, and repasts, and the superintendence, morally and corporeally, of a poor and extended parish, were ample and important occupations for Mrs. Evelyn. She remained, therefore, only a short time at Hales Hall ; retiring to give place to Sir John's two sisters, but leaving in the hearts of her nieces and nephews a fond recollection of her more than parental—her Christian care of them, and a regret for her departure which subsequent events tended strongly to confirm.

She was succeeded by Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Fortescue. Mrs. Waldegrave was a widow, without children, a sort of variegated old maid ; her angular points of character were all sharpened by a brief endurance of the yoke of matrimony. Mr. Waldegrave had left her somewhat poorer and prouder than he had found her : she was one of those rigidly right, harshly pious, and disagreeably good persons who acquire credit, without conciliating affection. Her religion had none of the benignant warmth, the diffusive cheerfulness, the generosity, the loveliness of Christianity ; it was that of ob-

servances, of rules, of dogmas, of self-approbation, and of unrelenting condemnation of those who differed from her. The leaven of old superstition clung about her; she still placed too much reliance upon the "tithe of mint, anise, and cummin," and too little importance upon the spirit, without which those tributes were without value. Her mode of religious instruction partook of this error. She liked so many services to be said, so many collects to be learned, so many hymns to be repeated. The deep conviction of the heart was a secondary question.

The source of all true virtue being vitiated, Mrs. Waldegrave's notions may be easily estimated. That "charity which begins—and stays at home" she could perfectly well understand. To have a proper sense of one's own rights, to cultivate a due contempt for others, to steel one's heart against any melting sympathies with the erring, always to blame the unfortunate, always to pay court to the prosperous,—these were her leading, if not avowed, rules of conduct.

Aunt Alice, as the children called her, was a weak echo of Mrs. Waldegrave, upon whose

stronger judgment she implicitly relied, and from whose decisions she considered there was no appeal. She was, as the Scotch say, like "the gowk to the titling," or, in good Saxon, like the hedge-sparrow and the cuckoo: her actions were all imitative of her more wily sister. The language, demeanour, and actions of the one were the pattern for the other. But, as the stronger qualities of Mrs. Waldegrave were diluted by a touch of imbecility in Aunt Alice, Mrs. Waldegrave's pride shone forth in Aunt Alice in the form of a little petulant variety, or was ridiculously obtrusive and boastful. But to return from this slight sketch to the main subject of my history.

It may readily be conceived, that a family, hitherto blindly indulged, were not likely readily to bend to the iron rule of these two ladies. Charlotte, the eldest, of weak health, and not over-strong understanding, did indeed, after many tears, and a few attempts at sullenness, succumb to a yoke which was less repulsive to her, than to the high-spirited Rosabel, who had as yet, in the expressive language of her brothers, "cared for no one." Rosabel had been hitherto looked upon as one of those



wild animals which never can be tamed; she had almost governed her mother, and quite governed her sister Charlotte; had won many a trophy in battle from her brothers; and resisted, with indomitable spirit, the usurpations of servants and governesses. Of her father she knew nothing; for hitherto, when he had been at home, he had liked his ease and pleasure, and had been contented to see a smiling, healthy family around him, without enquiring minutely into their mental and moral condition; a trait in his otherwise irreproachable conduct, for which he was doomed to experience the severest retribution.

During the interregnum over which Mrs. Evelyn had presided, affairs had gone on much in the same way. Servants had domineered, boys had fought, governesses dozed over their lessons, Charlotte had been passive, Rosabel had been spoiled. But, when Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Fortescue held the reins of government, a reform bill was quickly framed, introduced, and carried through the house. As in public establishments, sinecures were abolished, salaries reduced, pensions struck off, accounts regulated, the consumption of articles

restrained. All this was admirable, however the malcontents might complain of favoritism, as is their wont in other more important institutions ; and although it might be rumoured that the humbler and really laborious placemen were reduced, whilst the higher offices were left untouched. Still, however, the motive for retrenchment was excellent ; the necessity indubitable ; the results, it might be hoped, would be efficacious ; and Sir John felt the more obliged to his sisters for their exertions, because he deemed the nature of those efforts to be disagreeable. But in this he was mistaken. Mrs. Waldegrave enjoyed power, luxuriated in humbling the humble, revelled in cavilling at an account, and rejoiced in the dignity of being feared. Aunt Alice was glad that the maids were not allowed to wear lappets, or high necks, " they were coming to such a pass ;" and was particularly happy that her nieces were no longer unrestricted as to silk stockings. Such extravagance as reigned at Hales Hall she had never witnessed before.

These preliminary matters being arranged, then were the unhappy younger members to be enthralled and tutored. Charlotte was soon

caught and incaged, and, like a bullfinch, made to sing only the song she was taught. The elder boys were always at school or at college, or in other occupations. The little children, by means of removing their former attendants, by daily intimidation, the use of a closet dungeon, banishment to a noon-day bed, seclusion from all happiness, half dinners, whole lectures, poetry, spelling, and other inflictions, were soon subdued, if not improved. They crept about, and looked pitifully at the eye which had a glance of mercy—came into the dining room, marshalled, a little corps of good children, with their bows and curtsies. The sound of the battledore, and the top, the loud laugh, the treble notes of infantile delight, were heard no more. Hunt the slipper was obsolete; blind man's buff was vulgar. It was not lady-like to run, nor like a gentleman to laugh and romp. Monitory sounds were now heard along the broad sunny terrace-walk, instead of the jest, and the halloo of thoughtless merriment. The little Fortescues, in spite of nature, and early education, were actually becoming genteel,—and miserable.—But Rosabel, with her dark flashing eye, her gait of pride, and her rebel-

lions heart, was still unsubdued. Hitherto her fair, open brow had been seldom clouded by sorrow, nor even by anger ; for life had been all a sunny day to her. Her transports of passion had been evanescent ; for her character was not one which could retain injuries. She had prized, and tyrannized over her sisters ; and loved, and quarrelled with her brothers. She had scarce known contradiction, nor opposition ; and was ill calculated to encounter that controul over every minute action, that fastidious investigation into every motive and feeling, which the sway of Mrs. Waldegrave had introduced. At first, Rosabel stormed and fretted, and returned reproach for reproach, and taunt for taunt ; then her young spirits were bowed down by dejection, and the callousness of despair came over her. Still, however, she was inflexible ; and it was after renewed causes of irritation had fired her into fresh resolution, that she adopted the rash step, the circumstances of which have already been detailed.

## CHAPTER IV.

“ My mother,—when I heard that thou wast dead,  
Say,—wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?”

COWPER.

EARLY on a frosty morning, two days after Rosabel's elopement, Sir John Fortescue's carriage was seen driving up to the door of Mr. Warner's house. Rosabel, as she stood, finishing her morning toilet attire, could command, from a little window which looked sideways upon the principal entrance to the house, a view of Mrs. Waldegrave, stepping out, tall and straight as a Scotch pine, independently, without seeming to notice the aid which was offered her by her own footman, or by Mr. Warner's servant, who ran out upon the steps at the sound of the carriage wheels. Rosabel's very heart was chilled, as she observed her Aunt Alice creeping out after Mrs. Walde-

grave, and, in imitation of her prototype, march into the house with an air of as much dignity as the cold blasts, which cramped every limb at this early hour, could permit her to assume. They looked like the proper accompaniments of the season—cold, biting, comfortless.

“ They are come, Martha, in full force,” said Rosabel,—“ to take me home, I suppose ; must I go ? ”

“ Didn’t you promise me last night, Miss Rosa ? and was not Captain Ashbrook to make the old ladies understand that not a word was to be said to you if you did go ? That was agreed upon, you know.”

“ True,” groaned Rosabel—her youthful imagination heightened by her hatred of her Aunts ; “ but, depend upon it, Martha, I shall be immured, with Aunt Alice to watch me, no doubt. I know you will never see me again ; I shall be shut up in Aunt Waldegrave’s dressing room—any where but there !—or sent, perhaps, in banishment to Drayfield.”

“ Never, while Martha lives,” said the old nurse, weeping. “ Now I know all, I shall take care that Sir John knows it too.”

“What would my poor dear mama say, Martha, if she were alive?” pursued Rosabel, who was now in tears also.—“Her being ever alive,—my ever having had any one that loved me so, seems to me now all a dream. And her death seems to me a dream too. Don’t you remember, Martha, when poor little Howard was born, how you told me to sit in the lobby, and listen by the door, and that by and bye I should hear a new brother or sister cry? And I did hear it; and the sounds of rejoicing, and the bustle of footsteps too. Ah, Martha, can I ever forget what followed?—Suddenly there was a stillness—I listen’d, I went close to the door—I heard nothing—not a footstep—and, after a time, you came out, with the infant in your arms—but, ah! how still mama’s room was!—and I never heard her voice again.”

She covered her face with her hands, and, with the old nurse, wept bitterly.

“It seems to me, Martha, that I never really grieved for mama till now,” said Rosabel, raising her head—“when I think what must be my life at home.”

h! poor dear my lady,” interposed Mar-

tha, sighing deeply ; “ what would she say to it indeed ? ”

“ I shall beg of them to let me go to Aunt Evelyn.”

“ That they will not do, dear Miss Rosa ; there has always been a jealousy.”

“ I shall beg of them to let me go to school.”  
—“ And then you would run away again,” said Martha : “ school would never do for you, Miss Rosa.”

But now their conversation was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of a servant, who came to summon them down stairs.

Mrs. Waldegrave and Mr. Warner had, by this time, thawed into something like a friendly footing—a circumstance to be ascribed to the deferential reception which the two sisters had encountered from the Magistrate. As he happened to be the only member of his family, except the servants, down stairs, he stepped forth, at the sound of carriage wheels, on the scent for an event of some nature ; and an event in the country is a blessing to the active-minded, even if it be not altogether of an agreeable nature : still there is a great deal in having



something to do. Mr. Warner, with a tact habitual to a man accustomed to business, quickly discerned the object of Mrs. Waldegrave's visit, and had made no inconsiderable progress in that lady's good opinion, when Rosabel, followed by Martha, entered the apartment.

As the heroine of this little romance, or farce, or melodrama, whichever my readers may please to consider it, afterwards learned, a neighbour of Sir John's, Captain Ashbrook, lately returned from abroad, had undertaken to make an arrangement with her aunts, in case of her being restored to her home. The most positive promise had been obtained that no reproaches, nor even admonitions, except from Sir John Fortescue himself, should ensue upon the return of the young fugitive ; and this promise had preceded the disclosure of her retreat, which was made upon that condition only ; Captain Ashbrook then revealing that he had accidentally seen her on the preceding evening. Mrs. Waldegrave was therefore obliged to restrain her natural fluency upon the subject of delinquencies, and to incur the penalty of being constrained to adopt that inge-

nious mode of correcting an offender generally known by the phrase of "talking at" a person.

"Good morning, Miss Rosabel; good day, Martha; I hope you are quite well;" with a look that seemed to say, 'I hate the very sight of you.' "Yes, Mr. Warner, as we were observing, young gentlewomen in our day had not these notions; they were to be seen, not heard: I never remember addressing my father, Sir Hubert Fortescue, in my life, until first spoken to"—

"Very good indeed, exactly the order in which I keep my own family," replied Mr. Warner: "you know we are used to deference in the justice-room.—I have not the honor of remembering Sir Hubert, I am not long of this county; but have understood that he was a gentleman of an excellent reputation."

"Our family," observed Mrs. Waldegrave, "is not of yesterday; and you may suppose, Mr. Warner, how obnoxious it must be to *us*, who have never known the breath of slander but by its affecting others,—how obnoxious it must be to have a sort of stigma attaching to *us*, through the misconduct of any member of Sir John's family."

“The remark is too just,” observed Mr. Warner, shaking his head: “I don’t know myself that I had ever a more unpleasant difference to settle than that which you hint at, being more accustomed to legislate for young gentlemen than young ladies; but”—

“We will waive the subject, Mr. Warner, if you please.—You were alluding to Sir Hubert: he was one of the most exact men in the world; a man who took the most exact order in his affairs; a great scholar, and lived, and, I may say,—died, with the ‘Whole duty of Man’ under his pillow.”

“Poor man!” said Henry Warner to himself, for he had crept into the room, and stood peeping over his father’s shoulder, full of curiosity.

“I ring for my carriage, if you please, Mr. Warner.—Young people, now-a-days, think all sober reading dull; and I assure you, Mr. Warner, I have heard certain young ladies apply that term to the holy and excellent work in question: not that I object to some species of entertainment:—there are Mrs. Rowe’s ‘Letters from the Dead to the Living,’ very pretty reading, and what a lady ought to read: as for

history, which my father was not fond of for young ladies, I don't think exactly we should be content, Mr. Warner, like certain young ladies that I know, to take it all from Shakespeare's plays. Sir Hubert used to say, 'Study your duty, girls, first;' and, after that, he made no exceptions to easy reading.—But I lose time. Sir John will probably be by this hour returned, and will be expecting us home.—Miss Rosabel, we see you first, if you please: nay, but you must fain be content to receive Martha's last wishes of duty here; I wish you your health, Martha; Mr. Warner, good day; and should you ever"—

"Oh! I will make it my business to call upon Sir John," exclaimed the worthy magistrate.

"I should be sorry for you to give yourself that trouble," said Mrs. Waldegrave haughtily; "seeing that my brother is so seldom at Hales Hall: Sir John will, I am sure, make a point of writing to you. Sister Alice, I attend your pleasure; good day, Mr. Warner; good day, young gentleman:" and, without condescending to turn her head to the right, or to the left, as she uttered these adieux, Mrs. Waldegrave

entered her carriage, and drove off, sitting erect, in stern encounter with the unhappy Rosabel, who was planted, in deep dejection, on the back seat, directly opposite to her elder aunt.

The short journey, only seven miles, was made in total silence. Mrs. Waldegrave looked out of one window, Miss Alice out of the other. Vickey, Mrs. Waldegrave's dog, with a comforter round his throat, stood up on the seat between them, keeping his sharp, tri-cornered eyes fixed upon Rosabel all the time; she, poor girl, wishing every moment that she could open the carriage door, and make her escape. But they drew near home, and other feelings besides anger, and dislike, began to possess her mind.

Hales Hall, the family seat of the Fortescues, was in a style of architecture peculiar to this country, during the latter period of the last century. It was built of genuine red brick, roofed with tiles of actual blue, and decorated down its various compartments with narrow facings of stone. Its whole appearance suggested the notion rather of comfort, than of elegance or splendour, though it extended over no

inconsiderable portion of ground, and was composed of a substantial-looking centre, and two wings, which, like most wings, whether of seraph or cherub, that I have seen, appeared to encumber the main body. It stood well, on a gentle eminence, partly covered with wood, and the near approach to it was embellished by extensive and highly cultivated pleasure-grounds, in which Lady Fortescue had taken great delight.

Rosabel, nurtured within the walls of this modern edifice, had, with a girlish tincture of romance, often regretted that her grandfather, Sir Hubert, should have pulled down, in the spirit of what is called improvement, the old house, the real Hales Hall, and erected this spacious dwelling in its stead. Like Camden, she would "have restored antiquity to England, and England to antiquity." A small drawing of the house of her ancestors hung in her father's library; and its gable ends, odd-looking corners, cumbrous chimneys, and decorated doorway, were much to Rosabel's fancy. The park, however, was old; the elm which grew on the grass-plot before the house was old, the thorns which grew on the slope were old, even

the swans on the pools were as old as swans could be ; and the pictures, and books, and other appendages to the ordinary furniture, were of sufficient age to gratify the spirits of Stowe, or Leland, or Strype, or any other of those old porers into the dusty corners of antiquity, had those worthy gentlemen been in existence.

It so happened that Sir John had reached home, before the party had returned from Fairford ; and Rosabel, to her dismay, saw him pacing up and down in apparent anxiety, along a little by-walk among the trees, apart from the observance of public curiosity.

In spite of her natural courage, she trembled, for her father was not a person whose rebukes could be met with indifference. Hitherto she had never experienced anything like severity from his hands ; he had merely been held up to her as the last resort in cases of extra disobedience : an appeal to him was the *ne plus ultra* of punishment, and she knew not how she could encounter his frown.

Nothing is so soon perceived as one's own disgrace ; the " altered eye " of the very menial proclaimed it to Rosabel ; and she read, in

the grave and silent mode of rendering such services as were indispensable, that she was received at home as a culprit; that the ban of Mrs. Waldegrave, of Aunt Alice, and of Sir John's displeasure, was issued against her. This was, however, a minor grief; indeed it roused her to indignation; but the flush of angry pride died away upon her cheek, when she saw a little assembly of her younger sisters and brother at the extremity of the hall, attracted from their usual haunts by the sound of the carriage, draw back as she approached, and look timorously at their aunts, without offering to run forward and kiss her. Howard indeed, poor little innocent, held out his arms for her to take him in hers; and, oh! how fond, and how fervent were the caresses which for a few minutes she gave him, until Mrs. Waldegrave's stern "Take him away, nurse," recalled her to herself; and Rosabel was summoned away, being informed by a servant that Sir John required her immediate attendance in the library.

Sir John was seated when she entered, having entered the house by a different way. Rosabel had scarcely strength to close the door after her; the voice of her father, when he



commanded her to do so, made her start, although the sound was by no means a loud, or an angry one. She knew not what she expected, nor how to demean herself.

Previously to the interview, she had determined to tell her father all her grievances, and troubles, and to throw herself on his mercy : but now she had not a word to say, an idea to impel her to speak.

Sir John was a grave man, and a proud man, and a little deaf. He had never cultivated the affections of his children, and he scarcely knew whether they had hearts or not. Of one thing he had always been assured, that Rosabel had far less feeling, more violence of character, and about a hundred more faults than her elder sister. Since his sisters had come to reside with him, he had been perpetually incited to lecture, correct, and humble poor Rosabel ; but he knew not how it was ; there was something so open and guileless about the poor girl,—her air was so frank, her step so bounding, her laugh so joyous, that he could not bear to check what he thought might be innocent happiness, by unnecessary severity.

Upon the present occasion, he had well con-

sidered his conduct. He was shocked and harassed beyond measure by the imprudent step she had taken ; but he did not—what parent does ?—consider his child's character as depraved beyond remedy ; and he saw, or suspected, that severity had done its utmost : some new plan must be adopted,—perhaps kindness ; it was quite an innovation on the order of things, but it might be tried.

After some minutes' parley with himself, Sir John turned to address his daughter. He had a dark and somewhat stern eye, and the contour of his brow, and of his aquiline features, was austere ; but there was a softness in his voice as he said :

“ Rosabel, draw near,—give me your hand ;—I say nothing to you respecting what you have done, because—I am sure that, if you could have guessed the pain it has caused me, you would not have done it.”

Rosabel sank at her father's feet ; she clung even to his knees ; she kissed again and again the proffered hand ; she threw herself into his arms.

These were silent indications of repentance,

but of a repentance “not to be repented of;” they were the first dawnings of actual filial affection; the first assurances of filial duty; and the silent pledge thus given, was sacred.

## CHAPTER V.

“ How would you be,  
 If he, which is the top of judgment, should  
 But judge you as you are? O, think on that.”  
 MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

HAPPILY for Rosabel, the corrective process which the world sooner or later inflicts, began, in her case, at an early period, to chasten and strengthen her character ; and she ceased to be a creature of impulse merely, before she had arrived at that season of life when errors of judgment, and the indulgence of misguided inclination, become of vital consequence to our happiness, or welfare.

It was not until now, that her father had established in her heart the first principle of an attachment towards himself on her part, not merely instinctive. She had found him lenient, when she expected him to be severe ; she had met with his forgiveness, when she knew that she merited banishment from his presence.

She now began, for the first time, to feel that his good opinion was necessary to the continuance of her own self-complacency, and, consequently, to her comfort. Neglected, and even, in petty instances, oppressed, Rosabel was grateful for small favours: in this respect differing from most persons of her age, who, generally partaking of the goods of life without trouble or forethought, know not how to appreciate them until the variations of capricious human nature, or the changes and chances of life, have taught them gratitude to the few, from whom disinterested kindness is to be expected. Accustomed also to solitude, for Charlotte prudently shunned the contagion of her scape-grace sister, Rosabel was also romantic. She was prone to the working of that exploded good, or evil genius, as it may be considered, enthusiasm. This was, she knew, a vital defect in Mrs. Waldegrave's sight; and she carefully concealed her cherished failings—yet it sustained her, and the objects of her enthusiasm were innocent, and lofty, and holy.

In the first place, her love of nature rendered solitude less irksome to her, than it would have been for the careless observer,

or the systematic reasoner, whose actions are "ruled with a ruler\*." And with regard to her enthusiasm for individuals, she had two objects: of these, her father was undoubtedly the first; but she had another, also from motives of gratitude, in the neighbour of Sir John Fortescue, Captain Ashbrook, the only son of a gentleman of large property in the county.

Captain Ashbrook was, as she understood, the kind-hearted mediator who had undertaken to treat with her aunts in her behalf, and who had done it so effectually, that she was not only suffered to bear her disgrace in silence, on her return home, but to all appearance reinstated in her usual condition, with some amelioration as to the independance of her actions. Rosabel had never, to her knowledge, seen Captain Ashbrook, but he was a man of high character, young, accomplished, brave, and, about this time, to add to the interest, he had again sailed to join his regiment in America. Rosabel heard of general regrets for his absence, and expressions of admiration for the short, but brilliant military career which his life, from the age of twenty, to that of twenty-

\* Elia.

seven, had presented. And now, he had gone to join the gallant Sir Henry Clinton at New York. In the course of this year, the newspapers announced that the forts of Montgomery and Clinton had been reduced. Captain Ashbrook had accompanied General Clinton from New York, and had distinguished himself in the perilous but brilliant enterprize, brilliant at least in comparison with those which had preceded it, and the more extolled in consequence. They had sailed up Hudson's river : and Rosabel, who had all her life abjured study, began to apply to geography.—Captain Ashbrook was left in the garrison in one of the captured forts. Several of the neighbouring families had sons, or brothers, or nephews, engaged in the disastrous contentions with America ; but none had as yet obtained any military fame, or been mentioned in the private dispatches with so much distinction as Captain Ashbrook. This was the period (1777) when England began to find that her exhausted resources were indeed failing her, and that able men, willing for the contest, were now to be sought in the higher and middling classes, not yet stunned by the repeated slaughters which had

reduced our forces in an alarming degree. Volunteer corps were raised, many gentlemen of honourable families acting in them as privates.

Thus, a spirit of military adventure was generally diffused ; and whilst the contest with America, contending, as she doubtless was, with England under the " masked battery of France," was still reprobated by reflective and discerning persons, the gallantry with which it was carried on, on both sides, and the deep stake which the country had in the contest, a stake not only consisting in political interests, but vested in the sons, the brothers, the husbands of those peacefully at home, gave to the military character an importance fostered by our best affections.

Rosabel, therefore, felt even some degree of pride that the gallant Captain Ashbrook, with whose praises nearly all the county rang, should have concerned himself in one so lowly, although it was on an occasion little likely to impress him with much respect for her memory. He had also said some kind and palliative things of her in other quarters, and avowed an interest in her future welfare, maintaining, in a party at Mr.



Warner's, as Rosabel learned from Martha, in a subsequent interview with her former nurse, that such flights of fancy as Rosabel had displayed were not indicative of future delinquency. This was a doctrine too agreeable to her, and its assertion was too kindly meant, not to render Captain Ashbrook, for the time, the favourite hero of Rosabel's imagination, that *beau idéal* of excellence which every romantic girl frames to herself, and which is seldom personified in one of their own sex. Meantime, a year slid away. Rosabel's education, as it was called, proceeded much in the usual mode with young ladies in the country of that period. She had all her life resolutely opposed herself to tuition, and had struck out her own mode of study. Instructors were at that time scarce; and such as there were, but indifferent. From the organist at Shrewsbury the Misses Fortescue picked up a jingling of music, which they were but too lappy to abandon at a later period of life: Rosabel had, indeed, a wild, careless way of singing of her own, and, as her voice was sweet and clear, Sir John, as he sometimes heard her untaught notes in the shrubbery, and listened to her warbling away snatches of old tunes to

Howard, thought, with a father's partiality, that it was well enough. Besides this, and a little French, and a little embroidery, and a little dancing, taught by three itinerant professors, who each came once a quarter, very little instruction was imparted; and the solid branches of education might be acquired by accident, or they might be omitted altogether. From her youth upwards, Rosabel, in particular, had set spelling at defiance, detested grammar, and never could be taught accounts.

Thus, unemployed as their minds were, the sisters ripened into womanhood: both, according to general estimation, entitled, by personal appearance, to become County Belles; both decided contrasts to each other in every attribute. Charlotte methodical, but shallow—prudent, but devoid of talent—indifferent to any sort of cultivation—and not over-stocked with sensibility. Rosabel, with desultory habits, and quick feelings; not averse to intellectual improvement, if she knew how to set about it. As imprudent as any human being could be, credulous, and reckless; perhaps, not really so fond of admiration as Charlotte; but, to all appearance, far less anxious to retire from it in public. Attractive, if not

strictly beautiful, she was, of all persons, most calculated, at this early season of her life, to be admired by the one sex, and to be disliked and depreciated by the other.

Meantime, she was verging to the completion of her seventeenth year, little noticed, and, apparently, little prized by any one, when an accident disclosed to her that her father was not so indifferent to her happiness as she, at one time, conceived. She was prone, like all girls of an imaginative turn, to desultory reading—a taste, under Mrs. Waldegrave's jurisdiction, not very easily indulged. Sir John's smaller library, however, was encumbered with books in delightful confusion, so that a volume or two of Molière—translated, alas! of course, for Rosabel,—or of the Spectator,—or Bell's Theatre,—or any other of those forbidden boards of miscellaneous amusement which the young love to rummage, half forgetting, half digesting, what they read,—or even a novel or two,—could not, in the plenitude of disorder, be readily missed.

Rosabel, ignorant as she was, had little regard to time or place, when once her attention was riveted by the sort of reading she

loved. She was immersed, one afternoon, in Addison's exquisite tale of Theodore and Constantia, in which the interest rests upon one incident alone. She had read to that part, where, after years of separation, and changed in all but their mutual attachment,—disguised by conventual attire,—shackled by conventual vows,—they meet again—the confessor and the confessing;—at that moment of interest, her father's step and voice broke even that illusion: she was not in the confessional with Theodore; but in a retired nook of the library, a small apartment, which, for warmth, was parted from the principal room by a green curtain. The curtain was, fortunately, at this moment drawn across.

“Sister,” said Sir John Fortescue, somewhat sternly, “what is the use of reviving these things? Let all recollection of them be avoided. The world, Penelope, will be glad enough to revive such early delinquencies, if her own family are not determined, altogether, to dispel them from recollection.”

“Yes, brother,” Mrs. Waldegrave began; “but in case of Miss Fortescue's being introduced—of course, Rosa is not to come out at

present—and, poor thing, had she not better still continue dining with the governess, in regard to four o'clock being a late hour for her tender years?"

"Indeed, sister, I doubt it. Rosa is old enough to behave herself at table; and, if a taste for good society be not given her, she will take to that which is beneath her."

"Very likely," replied Mrs. Waldegrave.

—Rosabel could fancy the shake of the head which accompanied those two words.

"People will be glad enough to revive the remembrance of her early follies, sister, if we do not show that they are forgotten at home," said Sir John.

"That is uncommonly true," observed weak Aunt Alice, intending to aid her sister, but navigating, as she always did, without compass. "If you had heard Mrs. Goodyer, the other day:—'Miss Rosabel quite well, and at home just now?'"

"It is of little use, Alice, to mark such idle innuendoes. Rosabel, indeed, is likely to give me trouble enough"—

Sir John spoke in a tone which went to Rosabel's heart.

“ With regard to Charlotte,” he continued, “ I feel not the least uneasiness ; her docility—her self-command—her dutiful conduct to her aunts.” (Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice bowed assent to each of these clauses).—“ Charlotte is sure to do well. But Rosa is wilful, yet gifted”—

“ I am glad,” thought Rosabel, “ I have some sort of merit.”

—“ Engaging, but thoughtless and uncertain ; and, since the world,” continued Sir John, little thinking who listened to him,—“ since the world accords her the meed of personal charms, although I own I see it not” (fathers are so dull)—“ I cannot but anticipate for her many temptations—”

“ To which she will but too readily give ear,” croaked Mrs. Waldegrave.

“ And snares—”

“ Which her own folly will make for her.”

But at this critical part of the conversation, Sir John was suddenly called off.

“ I am certainly highly flattered,” thought Rosabel, when, upon finding the coast clear, she emerged from her hiding place : “ but my father—my kind, yet harsh—affectionate, yet

austere, father—shall not find his Rosabel so wilful, vain, and ill-fated a being as he has set her down for. No, Aunt Waldegrave—no, Aunt Alice ; I mean to be something better than either of you yet. With many, many thanks for your good opinion of me.”

Charlotte and Rosabel had hitherto enjoyed as few opportunities of good society, or of forming any acquaintance with the world, as they had of improving their minds, or of cultivating their tastes. The circle proper for them to visit in the neighbourhood, was, according to the Waldegrave code, extremely limited ; and the circumstances to be taken into account, in forming that circle, were station and family connection entirely : education, character, manners, acquirements, were not to be put in the balance. The number of a man’s acres was of far more importance than the number of his virtues. It is natural to expect that all old possessors of the soil, mingling, as they usually do, in the same class, should have notions of this sort ; nor are these notions and distinctions entirely to be deprecated, whilst they preserve them from degrading marriages, or from low associates. It is only the illiterate and the

narrow-minded who carry them to an absurd extent ; the cultivated and the benevolent know how to discriminate : and, in the present day, there is a generous deference, on the part of rank, to talent, and to merit of all kinds, which has obliterated the invidiousness of distinctions, and which must benefit all ranks. But this would have been quite incomprehensible to Mrs. Waldegrave, whose mind, if she had any mind, consisted in a series of prejudices, which she called reasons.

The war had robbed the country of most of its young men ; and boys, of too tender age to take an active part in the world, or elderly gentlemen, constituted the bulk of male society. In the shooting season, however, there was generally an influx of visitants ; some of them young men, who passed a week or two at Hales Hall, as their fathers or uncles had done before them. It was upon these expected arrivals, and upon another event, which was indeed an event, as Mrs. Waldegrave said, that the two affectionate aunts, whose partialities for their elder niece amounted to a sort of domestic party spirit, expatiated, in secret conference, one September morning.



## CHAPTER VI.

“ Many are the sayings of the wise,  
 Extolling patience as the truest fortitude,  
 And to the bearing well of all calamities.”

MILTON.

“ YOU know, sister, that the Captain is come back, and Ashbrook House all astir ; the old gentleman’s death has brought him back, upon leave of absence : but he was not in time to see his father, who had lived at Bath for years.”

Thus spoke Aunt Alice, as she turned out a large bundle of patch-work, from time immemorial her occupation ; one of those interminable pieces of work which never seem to grow any larger.

“ Well—and how long is the Captain to stay ? He likes Ashbrook ; his father never did. He will be thinking of marriage now—the heir of Medlicote—it is quite a duty.”

Mrs. Waldegrave had just wound up half a year’s accounts as she spoke ; for she had acted,

in that respect, as her own, or rather as Sir John's, housekeeper, since her accession to office. She looked at the sum total—an unpleasant prospect sometimes. "Sir John's expenses are very great," she said, with a sigh—"and all these children to be suitably provided for!"

"Oh, Charlotte is certain to marry," observed Aunt Alice, stitching away.

"Probably—only men are frightened at large families. Captain Ashbrook, for instance, might not like to marry the whole family. And then Rosabel puts herself so forward."—She glanced again at the accounts. "What a sum for haberdashery, and tailory!—and to think that these girls must, and ought to be, presented when they go to London: Miss Fortescue at any rate. She would be the first of the Fortescues who had not been—if she is not."

"The barley-corn satins are coming in," resumed Aunt Alice, working away.

"And then! at my brother's death, if the family consequence is to be kept up, the younger brothers and sisters must all be beggars!"

"And if it comes to that," said Aunt Alice, "they will never marry. I might, as you

know, sister, have been settled in life over and over again, if—”

“ Yes !” answered Mrs. Waldegrave, sharply, “ that’s an old story !” For she was aware of certain, never-dying, feminine weaknesses, on the subject of marriage, clinging to her sister’s character, like parasitic plants to ancient stems ; and the story of the Hon. Mr. B. who had been “ off,” as it is called, because he and Aunt Alice could not make up five hundred a year between them, was indeed, to her, an old story.

“ He will never think of Rosabel ; but Charlotte he might,” she went on saying to herself. —“ Even shoe-leather—what a sum for that !—and the mending is as much as the making !”

“ Well, I hope he will not chuse Rosabel, if he does think of marrying,” dropped from Aunt Alice’s lips by way of soliloquy.

Independent of dislike to the one, and partiality to the other, the point of seniority was a fixed principle in Mrs. Waldegrave’s mind.

“ No one will think of Miss Rosabel, while Miss Fortescue is in the way,” she said, sternly.

“ Yet Lady Lovaine, sister—and you know her to be a judge—Lady Lovaine said, loud

enough for Rosabel to hear—and the girl is already vain enough—‘Rosabel will throw her elder sister into the shade.’ I declare it made me quite ill to hear her say so—so different as it used to be between you and me, Penelope.”

“My Lady has her whims, though a very extraordinary, superior woman.”

“An extremely clever woman,” returned Aunt Alice. “Poor dear Mr. Beaufort! notwithstanding his disappointment—for he would have it she broke it all off!—would allow it was for the best!—Heigho!”

“Younger brothers ought not to think of marriage, except with heiresses, Alice.”

“—And now, indeed, he cannot,” returned Aunt Alice, mournfully; “for he’s speechless—his right side went first—it is the third stroke, Lady Lovaine says—the very first news she told me yesterday.—Dear me!”

“How very good of her ladyship to take such an interest in him!—But I am afraid, Alice, she will think it very unkind in us—(just see! the very article of pins—hair pins, minikins, and knitting pins—they may well talk of pin-money!)—that very item is frightful. She will think it so very inattentive in us to be so long in paying

our respects, after the illness of poor my Lord. Rosabel has often wished to see their place ; and I can propose it to her as a little treat, and reward for her better behaviour :—and it may be managed to leave her and Howard at Drayfield, in our way back, for a time ; Mrs. Rivers will look well after her there ; and Howard wants change of air.”

“ Very true, sister,—you’re always so sensible.”

“ And if my brother can be brought to think it best for Rosa to stay awhile, Captain Ashbrook will have time to get acquainted with Charlotte. It is, to be sure,” added the widow, in a canting, croaking voice, “ quite a trial to have my brother’s family as a charge !—but our own little means, my poor jointure, will be none the worse for our giving up housekeeping for a time.”

“ But my brother means, I consider, that Charlotte, in another year, should—”

“ Yes, Alice, you are mighty slow—if Miss Fortescue should marry, Rosabel will be sadly too young, too giddy, too childish, to take charge of the family : my brother knows that. He will not put Miss Rosa at the head of affairs for

these five years. Never! to have the ordering of a set of extravagant, idle, good-for-nothing servants; and she, forsooth, as idle, and, if she could, would be as extravagant as themselves."

"Surely Captain Ashbrook will see the necessity for his marrying," returned Aunt Alice, catching up the train of her sister's ideas, "the property to go away from him to his cousin! and I suppose he has had enough of fighting by this time."

"I suppose so, too," answered Mrs. Waldegrave, petulantly, taking a last look at her accounts—"four and two are six, and ten make sixteen, for ribbons only—*Boulets rouge, Vestris' bleu*—so, Miss Rosa must have her ruffles pinked too—what is the age come too!—We will keep her at Drayfield, with her top-knot of bright red, forsooth, till he has seen Charlotte."

This arrangement was accelerated by an occurrence, which happened in a more convenient season than such occurrences usually happen. Howard, the youngest of the family, a delicate child, and consequently an object of peculiar affection to his father, was seized with what was then termed a millitary fever; upon the

subsiding of which complaint, change of air was decidedly prescribed for him. Drayfield, the Siberia of Mrs. Waldegrave's imagination, was formerly the seat of the Fortescue family ; and, when the family was more opulent and less numerous, had been usually appropriated to the residence of the eldest son, if perchance he married, and required a separate establishment previous to his father's death. Of late years, it had, however, been found convenient to let a portion of the house, and to convert it into a farm ; reserving, nevertheless, a few rooms for the use of the family at the Hall, to serve as a kind of infirmary to recover from, or as a change of abode to avoid those contagious diseases then so frequently fatal ; and of which our grandfathers and grandmothers were, with so much reason, afraid. Drayfield had served as a nursery for the young Fortescues at various times, when Lady Fortescue had been ill, or confined ; and, before the amelioration in Rosabel's condition, it had been Mrs. Waldegrave's custom to threaten her with being sent there as a kind of disgraceful banishment from the comforts of home, and from the undervalued privilege

of her own society, and that of her aunt. Rosabel had, however, a predilection, rather than a distaste for Drayfield, with which some of her earliest associations were connected ; and, at another time, she would have hailed as an emancipation from severer restraint, the prospect of a week or two there ; but, just now, new pleasures were opened to her at Hales Hall ;—her brothers were coming home, and there was going to be a ball at the nearest market town, at which Charlotte was to be introduced ; and Rosabel was not without her secret hopes that Sir John, being one of the stewards, might take it into his head that she should also partake of that amusement. Moreover, Captain Ashbrook had returned. At any rate, a large party was to assemble at the Hall to dine, and to set off from thence to the ball. Under these circumstances, poor Rosabel coloured with vexation, and was, perhaps, assailed by some less excusable feeling, when Mrs. Waldegrave coldly informed her that Howard and his nurse were ordered to go to Drayfield, and that Sir John wished her to accompany them, to prevent Howard from being



dull, away from his brothers and sisters; especially as she was his favourite sister.

“But,” added Mrs. Waldegrave, without pausing, lest there should be time for rebellion, “to shew you how very indulgent we are to you, I have obtained Sir John’s permission to let you stay here till to-morrow, that I may take you to see my own near connection, Lady Lovaine, and Medlicote; I know, Rosa, you have long wished to see that place, and I have no objection to a little indulgence now and then.”

“It is only now and then,” thought Rosa, as she retreated into her own room, to conceal or to vent her vexation: but she remembered her father—she thought of his wishes for peace—the consideration which he had evinced, in the conversation which she had overheard, for her real welfare. She felt her pride piqued, to evince that she was better than he had thought her.

“My father shall not find Rosabel so wilful, so hopeless a character as he has judged me. Now I am put to the proof, I will shew him that I can submit, for his sake. As for my aunts, I would not stir an inch on the road towards Drayfield for them, were they not my father’s sisters.”

## CHAPTER VII.

“ The rich and great are understood  
To be, of course, both wise and good.”

CHURCHILL.

IN all her little troubles and contests with her aunts, it was a source of irritation to Rosabel that Charlotte never seemed to sympathize with her. Charlotte's faculties seemed frost-bound; her feelings withered by the blighting influence of her Aunt Waldegrave's ascendancy over her mind; her capacity was, in fact, limited, and her feelings for any one, except herself, were devoid of generous warmth. It is one effect of early, and unlimited, and indiscriminate indulgence, perhaps its worst effect, to render the character selfish. From childhood, before her mother's death, Charlotte had studied, quietly and unremittingly, her own comfort and convenience: she was a politician in small matters, and in

the most unobtrusive manner ; and, with an unconscious air, always secured her point. From childhood she had possessed the art of protecting her privileges, and of securing her property from the incursions of her brothers ; —no easy matter, for men are not born chivalric : and, from the cradle, girls must yield. — In all sisterly contentions Rosabel was always defeated, and generally with loss of character ; whilst Charlotte could preserve her own temper, unruffled, like those northern seas which are always frozen. Her calmness and forbearance were, therefore, ever the theme of praise ; and were proportionably the more provoking, and afforded a greater contrast between her and Rosabel, for Mrs. Waldegrave to expatiate upon. Without entering into a comparison between the characters of the two sisters, it may be observed that they stood upon very unequal grounds with respect to their mutual affection. Rosabel's nature was all prone to love, and wanted only an object to bestow that love upon : indulgence had made her violent, not cold ; as it was, she doated upon Charlotte, though her sisterly regard was perpetually chilled by

Charlotte's almost invariable desertion of her cause, when any contest arose between her and her aunts: yet Rosabel was unwilling to believe that a selfish caution had any part in this heartless abandonment of her interests and comforts, and, both to others and to herself, attempted to defend Charlotte's conduct, as long as she could blind herself, or others, to its real cause.

She knew, however, from Charlotte's wonted prudence, that it would be in vain to urge her to intercede with her aunts with regard to her not going to Drayfield; and therefore prepared, not without some girlish tears, for the seclusion of the Farm; consoling herself with the reflection that Howard would be happier for her presence; and, perhaps, comforted by the idea—so grateful to affectionate natures—that there was even one human being who loved her better than he did any one else. Too proud to show her mortification, and resolved to conduct herself to her father's approbation, she therefore, for once, possessed her soul in patience. A gleam of pleasure was, however, afforded her by the prospect of seeing Medlicote Hall, an ancient structure, and its mistress,

Lady Lovaine, as great a curiosity as any of the antiques which the old Hall contained. Rosabel had only once had a glimpse of her, as she was flying down stairs, in a scarlet riding habit; and, at that single interview, had had the misfortune to offend her ladyship, who was somewhat of a gaunt and masculine figure, by mistaking her for Hubert, who had just returned from hunting. It was in vain that she had humbly apologized, and declared that, had she seen her ladyship's face (for she was behind her), she would not have made the mistake. This explanation had not, however, been able to save Rosabel from a lecture on manners, a subject with which most young persons would gladly dispense.

Before eleven o'clock, on the day fixed, the party set out. Charlotte was left behind, although Mrs. Waldegrave made use of the family coach, because it was necessary to reserve a place on the back seat for Vicky, the beloved of Mrs. Waldegrave's heart, if she had a heart,—one of those round-headed, flat-eared little dogs, who live in a perpetual irritation, and keep others so; the politicians, I suppose, of the canine community. The deep-set, bright, dark eyes of Vicky seemed well to reflect the

harshness of his mistress's expression of countenance ; they were congenial souls ; his bark was often responsive to her notes of anger ; and, like her, he seemed ever on the watch for something to censure, and to quarrel with.

Drayfield was seven miles from Hales Hall, and Medlicote twelve miles distant ; both in the same direction. The road was uninteresting, but as rough and rutty as if it had been meandering over scenes of romantic beauty and variety. The day, for August, was cold and blowy.

" Vicky does not like it," observed Miss Alice ; " 'tis too cold for him."

" Vicky, pet, sit down—there, be quiet," said Mrs. Waldegrave, as if she were speaking to a favourite child. " Rosabel," she added, in a tone of voice totally different, " you will remember, if you please, that Lady Lovaine is a woman of rank, and highly bred up, and cannot suffer that people of her ladyship's station and our own should mingle with their inferiors. You will say nothing about being acquainted with the Warners."

" Is she likely to ask me ?" enquired Rosabel.

“She! indeed!—Yes! my Lady Lovaine has her peculiarities, and there is no knowing what questions she may chuse to ask.—(Vicky, darling pet, be quiet now; you must not put your pretty nose out of the window; you’ll catch cold, love.)—She’s the head of my husband’s family, and the family of Lovaine has never had a blot upon its escutcheon as yet.”

“I almost wish it had,” said Rosabel, as if involuntarily. “I thought there was a something.”

“—‘Wish it had,’ child! why?”

“Because—I don’t suppose it is right—I feel such an interest in those families that are some how or other related to our English Kings. The Plantagenets, for instance, or even Charles the Second; and I thought that those relationships never happened, some how or other, without a—blot—or a stain—or a something wrong—or a—; and I thought Lord Lovaine some how or other had been related—his ancestors, I mean—to Charles the Second.”

“Oh!” said Mrs. Waldegrave, “such a circumstance as that is not a stain, or a blot at all; but a very great honour. To be related to the Plantagenets, or Tudors, or Stuarts,

any way, is a very great distinction. Unluckily, there are but few Tudor descendants. You ought to know more of history than I do ; but there was only one well-authenticated Tudor peerage, I believe.—No ; *that* would not be a blot at all. It would be a terrible stain to have had an ancestor a mercer, or a grocer, for instance—to have to put a strip of leather across one's armorial bearings, like your friends the Warners. I have heard say his grandfather was a currier : now I do call that a blot, and a very foul one ; even dealing in wash-leather would not carry it off," she concluded, with a smile so sneering and bitter, that Aunt Alice re-echoed it in her weak way ; and Vicky, ever attentive, thought something was going on, and gave a start, and a short bark. But Rosabel, though prone to laugh, was mute and thoughtful.

By this time they had reached the gates of Medlicote Park, a place looked upon with great reverence by Mrs. Waldegrave and Aunt Alice. Like all narrow-minded persons, Mrs. Waldegrave had her worldly idols, her standards of importance and elevation, the monuments of greatness, to which she repaired in



the humble character of a worshipper. Like most arrogant and domineering persons, she was capable of a mean-spirited servility to the great and powerful, and of an abject dependence upon their notice and good opinion for her own happiness. Before she married, every thought was centered in the head of her own family ; it was " my brother," and " my sister Fortescue," continually. The shadow of their importance sheltered, without obscuring, her. After her marriage with Mr. Waldegrave, her powers of veneration were directed to the heads of his family. It was " my sister Lady Lovaine," and " my Lord," who were her oracles on all subjects, from the highest points of moral importance, down to the curing of a sore throat.

Lady Lovaine was a woman who chose to practise, or to affect, great eccentricities. In common life, she would have been accounted a very coarse, rude woman, who did not know how to behave ; but, being Lady Lovaine, her singularities were regarded by her inferiors as characteristics of a strong mind, superior masculine understanding, powerful judgment, &c. Like insane persons, she knew how to soften, in society where her freedoms and peculiarities

would not be submitted to, the strange and harsh features of her accustomed deportment. From the practice, however, of appearing singular, she had, in process of time, really become so, and "Lady Lovaine's way" was a sort of proverbial phrase for every thing that was disagreeable, eccentric, and overbearing.

Lord Lovaine was far less offending, and, by a long series of gout, and a natural touch of imbecility, two things which his wife hinted were hereditary in his family, was reduced nearly to the condition of a cypher; like most men of the same description, not being wise enough or strong enough to take his own part. He made, however, what is termed an excellent husband; a despotic government, not under the Salique law, being completely established at Medlicote, the splendid seat of Lord Lovaine, and of his ancestors.

It was, indeed, a splendid place; truly English; at once imposing and comfortable. Rosabel, as the carriage entered the Park, exclaimed that she had never seen such elms, overarching the broad carriage road, and many

of their branches propped with artificial metallic aids, to sustain timber of such antique growth. Beneath, as in a vista, were seen the numerous antlered inhabitants of a scene at once sylvan and magnificent; and now, afar off, Lady Lovaine herself appeared, directing the operations of some workmen, who were employed in thinning the timber. A turn in the road soon brought her ladyship's visitants within a few yards of the place where she stood; but, though it was evident that she saw them, she moved neither feature nor limb to welcome them; but continued, with stentorian voice, haranguing her "subordinates," as she usually called them. She was dressed in a little riding hat, a drab great coat with capes, not the famous Maccaroni cut, invented by the reigning belle, Miss North, but a far less elegant, and more antique article, with a cravat, and large, masculine boots. This was her usual undress costume, out of doors, and was not, at that period, outrageously peculiar; but it was her figure, so gaunt, and stiff, that gave it a ludicrous aspect, as she stood, blown about by the wind.

"What," cried Rosabel, bursting into an

irreverential laugh, "is that Lady Lovaine? I really thought it was a figure set up to frighten kites or crows."

"Rosa—my dear," exclaimed both her aunts at once, "I am shocked—quite—"

But Lady Lovaine had, by this time, with commanding strides, reached the carriage, and ordering the coachman to stop, peeped in at the carriage window, taking a complete survey before she addressed any one.

"So, you are here, are you? and, Vicky, you are here, I see. So! I expected what I call a family inundation the moment I saw the coach. I am glad you were not half an hour sooner: I am so busy. Come, Miss Alice, do get out and walk; it is a sin to be driving for *young* people on this fine day. You have a niece there, I see: let us have her out too."

Rosabel, who had no objection, was delighted to jump out, and join her ladyship; but Miss Alice, who was regularly set forth for a morning visit, remained where she was.

"So! she is in full feather, I suppose; triggered out, I suppose, in her best *Artois*," said Lady Lovaine, contemptuously. "Charming

creature!" she added, in a lower tone. "But you have clogs, or walking shoes, I suppose? not water-proof, I dare say. Now if you want a recipe for making shoes water-proof, I can give you one. Let me see—but I have it all written down at home. It would be well for you to use it, your family being rather given to gadding about. Have you ever been at Medlicote before?—Of course you are bound to admire this entrance. Your Aunt Alice calls it quite classical—ha, ha, ha! it is Gothic, you know. Look up; do you see the porteullis? Now turn your head round, and tell me, do you observe my improvements yonder?"

She pointed, whilst speaking, to a large bank, covered with flowering shrubs, on which was an ample terrace walk, the first of a series of terraces, the highest of which was clothed with shrubs, mantling until they amounted to a thick and hanging wood.

"There, if you like to drown yourself," said Lady Lovaine, pointing to a high spot in the ascent, "is the spot where fair Lucy of Medlicote drowned herself, a hundred years ago, for a mere trifle—a disappointment of the heart. The girl must have been deranged, or a fool.

She was a direct ancestor of my Lord's. Well, come in, and have some luncheon : I suppose, like all the rest of your family, you eat luncheon—a very bad habit, and what I attribute Mrs. Waldegrave's indigestion to."

As her ladyship spoke, she marched in, without seeming to remember that there was any one behind her ; crossed a hall, passed through a billiard room, proceeded through several apartments, and, opening a door, walked into a very small, close, kind of study, where sat, on an easy chair, with a cushion under each elbow, the infirm, harmless nobleman, whose virtues Rosabel had daily heard called up, ever since she had come into close contact with Mrs. Waldegrave and Aunt Alice.

" Here, my lord—you are quite astounded—why it is only something young and lively from Mrs. Waldegrave's store-room. But where are the two—old maids—I was going to call them ? Oh, here they are. Well, girls, how are you ? Begone, you wretch," she added, kicking Vickey out of the room. " There's no animal in nature to be endured, except a monkey. If you saw my sweet Jacko, Miss Rosabel, you would lose your heart di-

rectly. Talking of hearts, there's Captain Ashbrook somewhere about. If any one has a heart that goes a begging, it would be as well to bestow it upon him. Alice, have you *quite* done with such matters? You have? Yes, so I thought."

"Sir John quite well?" said Lord Lovaine, a shrivelled-looking old man, his face all nose, and no cheeks, and with a frame so attenuated, that one wondered on what inflammatory part of it that fierce demon of voluptuousness, the gout, could make its prey.

"Sir John, my lord, is quite as well, I consider, as the season will permit. We have had a good deal of ague about us, in the village, and down at the lodges. It has been remarkably trying this winter. Have you the ague at Medicote, my lord?"

"Oh! the ague!" said Lady Lovaine; "I cure that directly. The snuff of a candle, boiled in treacle—a specific, quite; and a remarkably cheap remedy."

"Dear me!" said Aunt Alice, as if a new light had broken in upon her; "So it is."

"My lady," said Lord Lovaine, with an effort of speech which seemed like his last gasp, "is

an excellent physician ; she prescribed for me yesterday—a very powerful dose.”

“ A pound of garlic, boiled in strong, good beef tea ; to be taken at intervals—of two to four hours. Those who take it once, never have the gout again,” said Lady Lovaine, imperiously.

“ What a nice thing for my brother,” said Mrs. Waldegrave : “ remember, Alice.”

“ Try it yourself first, my good lady,” said Lord Lovaine. “ I assure you,” he added, in a low voice, “ ’tis most inflaming.”

“ Captain Ashbrook, my lady,” interposed the servant, who at this moment opened the door.

“ Well then, here is something more inflaming,” said Lady Lovaine. “ Mrs. Waldegrave, look well after your niece. Shew Captain Ashbrook into the library. He has been wandering about his old haunts, as he calls them, all the morning, and is not, I dare say, fit to be seen. Nevertheless, *c’est un brave garçon*. Come, Alice ; come, Miss Rosalina. I am glad they did not christen you Penelope—I hate classical names.”

“ My lord looks sadly, poor dear man,” said



Mrs. Waldegrave, as the four ladies trudged towards the library.

"Oh, I am happy to say he is really pulled down a little, at last: too full a habit by far—quite a comfort to see him reduced—quite a comfort, I assure you, Mrs. Waldegrave."

## CHAPTER VIII.

“ His years but young, but his experience old,  
 His head unimmellow'd, but his judgment ripe ;  
 \_\_\_\_\_ and, in mind,  
 With all good grace to grace a gentleman.”

SHAKSPERE.

ON any other occasion, Rosabel would have loitered in the spacious rooms through which she now passed, adorned with curious cabinets, and with crystal vases, and Delft china, arranged about them, and their walls hung with many an antique portrait, or a favourite game piece, or flower piece. At any other time Rosabel would have deviated into the hall to gaze at the famous Henri Coutters, which hung there, depicting swans, whose plumage seemed to rise and unfold in all the dignity and beauty of nature. At any other moment Rosabel could not have avoided running to the windows to gaze out upon the lawns, deepened with stately cedars, or embellished by the flowering boughs of the lauristinus, not yet in all its pride of

blossom, its dark foliage contrasting finely with the soft green of the velvet sward. But now she hastened on, coming indeed last in the train, and almost treading on Aunt Alice's high-heeled shoes, or catching her foot in Mrs. Waldegrave's train. She fell back, however—she could not resist it—to look at some tapestry : she had never seen any before.

“ Captain Ashbrook is a great acquisition to the neighbourhood,” observed Mrs. Waldegrave to Lady Lovaine : taking the opportunity, whilst Rosabel was out of hearing, to make her remark.

“ Yes ; especially to those who have daughters or nieces,” replied Lady Lovaine : walking, according to her custom, very fast, and leaving Mrs. Waldegrave, breathless, half behind her. “ Which of your young ladies do you intend for him ? Your god-daughter, I suppose.”

“ Oh, Miss Fortescue,” said Mrs. Waldegrave, loftily, “ has no occasion for any one to look out for her ; she is sure to have numerous proposals.”

“ The world, then, is altered since I was young ; for it was not then the practice to offer to young ladies, unless there were some temp-

tations besides mere prettiness or sweetness: but, since Charlotte is likely to abound in lovers, it will be as well to bestow Captain Ashbrook upon Rosabel—fair Rosabella.”

“Your Ladyship’s opinion has always weight with me,” returned Mrs. Waldegrave, her colour mounting into her face; “but Rosabel is a mere child; we do not sanction such notions in children of her age.”

“Children of her age, sister Waldegrave, will have such notions; and the more you keep them from male society,” she added, stopping still, and looking sternly in Mrs. Waldegrave’s face, “the more of these notions they will have.”

“Bless me, you astonish me!” said Miss Alice, who just now joined her Ladyship and Mrs. Waldegrave.

“I should never have thought of your Ladyship sanctioning such things,” observed Mrs. Waldegrave, sanctimoniously.

“That is Captain Ashbrook,” said Lady Lovaine, stopping short in one of the passage-rooms. The colour came into Rosabel’s face: but, after all, it was only a picture—a boy in a green velvet coat, with a dog beside him, stiff,

and quaint, and set, like most of the portraits of that day, yet, with a certain fire in his dark eyes.

“Is it possible,” said Rosabel, “can that be like Captain Ashbrook?”

“Judge for yourself,” replied Lady Lovaine, opening another door—“Ashbrook, why, for shame!—what self-indulgence! a soldier, and fatigued with a day’s sport!—here are Mrs. Waldegrave and the Miss Fortescues, your neighbours; not sisters, but aunt and niece.” she added, with an expression of half malicious pleasure; for she had a cordial dislike to Mrs. Waldegrave, an infinite contempt for Aunt Alice; who, having been the youngest of her family, could never be persuaded to think herself old.

Captain Ashbrook sprang from the couch on which he had thrown himself, being tired with the morning’s exercise, and turned towards the ladies, thus introduced to him, a countenance so animated and intelligent, that it would have been difficult minutely to have criticised its claims to regularity of feature. Yet, without being able to bear that test, it was not a countenance to disappoint the romantic par-

tiality which Rosabel had encouraged for her hitherto unknown friend. There was not beauty enough to endanger a man's being a coxcomb on that account ; there were no "chiselled, Antinous-like" features—no "polished brow"—no "dark fringes that swept the cheek by way of eye-lashes;"—in all these attributes of a hero of romance, Captain Ashbrook was deficient. His complexion was a good deal sun-burnt, and he looked older from that circumstance than he really was. His hair, which was well enough in its way, was atrociously turned back from the forehead, and rigidly trained into two regular curls, over each ear. Moreover, its natural beauty of hue was entirely obliterated by that infamous invention, powder, already somewhat in the wane for young ladies, but still used by gentlemen, and by military men retained until a period which we can all remember. Besides, to leave the poor man no chance of looking like a natural human being, it was clubbed, as they then called it, behind ; that is to say, tied somewhat after the fashion of a horse's tail, forming a sort of sequel to the unhappiness of the ill-used, tortured heads of those times.

With all this, it was some merit to look well; yet Rosabel, from force of education, and not having had the advantage of our modern taste, thought it all very becoming. It was true, this mode of dressing the hair shewed to full advantage the fine, manly, open brow of Captain Ashbrook; whilst the formal cut of a military undress, which he wore, harmonized, if any thing could harmonize, with the style of his hair. But, after all, men owe little to the details of personal appearance; scarcely anything to feature, in the eyes of women of discernment, but every thing to expression, manner, and intelligence. It was the good breeding of Captain Ashbrook, his animation and ease—the superiority of mind, obvious, even in his casual remarks—for in these, I think, it is sometimes most obvious: the happy wit which he had of enticing people, as it were, to converse: not plunging red-hot into discourse, as many do, becoming soon breathless themselves, and scarcely giving people time to assent. His evident wish not to shine outrageously himself, as a star of the first magnitude, but to please gracefully, and to draw forth the most agreeable qualities which his companions possessed.

It was all these attributes combined, with a certain easy gallantry to ladies, that formed the basis of his success in gaining their admiration ; and not his fine eyes, or Roman profile, or handsome figure, or any of those adventitious and unimportant circumstances. Captain Ashbrook had a happy look, a beaming, kindly eye ; when his face was serious, it was very serious—deeply reflective—almost stern ; but, in general, it had the expression of a refined joyousness ; not a coarse, unthinking mirth, but a gaiety, a gladness, which springs from a proper appreciation and enjoyment of the many delights of our daily existence. And, as yet, though the tranquillity of his present leisure hours was enhanced by the remembrance of past toil and privations, his experience had comprised no actual troubles, except the death of his father, and that was palliated by circumstances—no real affliction or bitter disappointment ; few things to wound his self-love ; nothing to sully his fame, or to threaten the stability of his fortunes.

Rosabel trembled, as, according to orders, she sat down on the very next seat to him, and thought she was dreaming.



Lady Lovaine, though not inhospitable at other meals, disapproved of luncheons, and therefore sat apart, looking on chillingly at the good appetites of her guests.

"Ashbrook, do you attend to my Cousin Waldegrave, if you please. Rivers, see that my Lord's panada is taken into the study directly. Miss Rosa, are you actually hungry?—and when you have all finished," she resumed, after allowing a very brief time for the repast, "Captain Ashbrook will shew the fair Rosabella the picture gallery."

"My horses are rested, I believe," said Mrs. Waldegrave, endeavouring to look placid.

"Very well; they can wait, I suppose; it will do them no harm to stand, or they can go round again to the stables. Captain Ashbrook, you know the way—but I think if you were to take Miss Rosa a turn on the terrace first, it would do you both good:—Aunt Alice, what are you stirring for? they don't want *you*—well, do not stay above an hour at any rate, young people," added her Ladyship. "Shew Miss Rosa my improvements, Ashbrook—the new alcoves and the fuchias."

"Her ways are inexplicable!" said Mrs.

Waldegrave to herself, as Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook closed the door after them.

“ Captain Ashbrook is, as you remark,” resumed Lady Lovaine, a great acquisition to the neighbourhood. I am quite happy to have an opportunity of bringing him and your niece together—there they are—look, Alice, look—they walk too fast to be making love, I think—but Rosabel is really a fine-looking girl—remarkably like her mother’s family.”

“ My niece Charlotte,” observed Miss Alice, timorously, “ is allowed to be most of a lady ; so very well-conducted and quiet.”

“ Very likely ; but I don’t like quiet girls, I would as soon have Jacko without his tricks : quiet girls are like still waters, always the deepest. Mrs. Waldegrave, I think you were to have the recipe for my famous tic douloureux plaister ; I cannot give you the recipe, it is a profound secret ; but, if you will come with me to my Lord’s room, I will hunt for some of the plaister for you.”

She gave a parting look at the young pair. “ There they are—they seem to fly now !—what spirits your niece has ! you should bring her forward ; she will be a credit to the family.”

Meantime, Captain Ashbrook and his fair companion proceeded leisurely through the most frequented walks of the pleasure-grounds around Medlicote Hall, resting every now and then to admire the views, or to expatiate upon the characteristics of the scenery. Rosabel, accustomed to exercise, and therefore enjoying it, would have derived pleasure from the walk with any species of companion, or with none at all: perhaps she might actually have enjoyed her walk more without the society of Captain Ashbrook, whose presence she could not help regarding with some awe. She remembered that he had witnessed her early transgression; but, though she remembered it, it had, nevertheless, almost escaped Captain Ashbrook's remembrance. At first, when he saw her, a sort of vague recollection, an indistinct notion, came across him of some peculiar incident in which he had taken a part having attached to one of the Miss Fortescues; and he presently remembered the whole history. But two years of actual service had quite effaced the young lady's name and person from his memory, and he began to wonder whether this was the same Miss Fortescue that had a taste

for adventures. He regarded her, therefore, with considerable attention, was on the look out for eccentricity and flippancy, studied well the expression of her features, and ended by concluding that she was too subdued, and innocent-looking, too timid, and must be still too young, to have engaged two years ago in such a frolic. He thought himself remarkably fortunate, however, to escape from three elderly ladies, each endowed with some unpleasing peculiarity, with a fine, artless, and happy-looking girl, who bounded along to his heart's content, and whose very speed and elasticity were refreshing after the hobbling pace of Lord Lovaine, when he could crawl out, or Lady Lovaine's deviating and capricious ways, now quick, now slow, and incessantly stopping or running off. After all, thought Captain Ashbrook, as, standing by Rosabel, he caught a view of her glowing face, "there is nothing like youth in woman—especially after those three parchment, dried-up faces—I beg their pardons—excellent women, no doubt—but not to look at."

"Well," thought Rosabel, in her turn, "I had no idea gentlemen were so easy to talk to ;—I

am sure I shall never be able to endure Mr. Henry Warner again ;—there is something so very different—though I can scarcely tell what it is—I wonder whether he goes to the ball.”

“ You are serious,” said Captain Ashbrook, smiling—“ Perhaps you are not aware that you are quite out of sight of your aunts.”

“ What can he mean ?” thought Rosabel ; “ now he is referring to former times ; it is too bad.”

“ I hope we shall have a good ball at Cherverton next week,” resumed Captain Ashbrook ; “ do you think we shall ?”

“ I really do not know—I cannot tell—but I dare say—there is a moon, I believe—that is a great point.”

“ Oh ! certainly ; but the moon will not do everything. Do you like minuets ? For my part, I have led such a rambling life of late, I am not competent to a minuet.”

“ Nor I either,” answered Rosabel, disconsolately ; “ but I do enjoy a country dance. My sister Charlotte will be there ; but I am thought too young.”

Captain Ashbrook was all disappointment and gallantry, and said, of course, a great deal

more on the occasion than he would have done to Mrs. Waldegrave or to Aunt Alice; and Rosabel began to be very happy indeed. She knew not how it was, but she had never found the breeze so refreshing, nor seen the tints so fine; they fell with such delicacy, and, to speak figuratively, so discriminatingly, upon the early-fading trees.

Captain Ashbrook felt more enthusiastic than usual as to the beauties of the place, which, in general, he commended not; for Lady Lovaine's improvements, as she called them, were not to his taste. The words "lovely, charming, delightful," came, he knew not how, very readily to his lips; he began to think he had done his Aunt injustice, and that some of her plantations looked well in certain aspects—that the lake was not positively frightful, and that he would not altogether pull down the new wing of the house, which, the day before, he had, in his own mind, condemned. Nature, this day, to this gay couple, had been in her very best garb.

## CHAPTER IX.

Liberal Nature —————  
 What to beauteous woman kind,  
 What arms, what armour has she assign'd ?  
 Beauty is both

COWLEY.

CAPTAIN Ashbrook and Rosabel had set off on their walk at a scrupulous distance from each other ; he respectfully handing her over any obstacle that occurred, but not presuming to offer her his arm. As they returned, however, descending terrace after terrace, they found themselves on much more sociable terms than when they had set out. They trotted down, very gaily, till, as they came to the last set of steps, Captain Ashbrook said, “ You will want assistance here, I think ; will you allow me to offer you my arm.”

Now Rosabel was seldom in want of assistance upon any occasion of this sort ; her companionship with her brother Hubert having taught her at any rate the art of jumping over stiles, clearing fences, and such like ; however, she took the Captain’s arm.

It was in this guise they walked up to the carriage where Mrs. Waldegrave was seated, and whither she summoned her niece by a servant. Lady Lovaine, who was, to use her own phrase, in and out all day, met them at the hall door.

"I have been unable to comply with your commands, my lady," said Captain Ashbrook. — "Miss Fortescue is hurried away: she has seen scarcely anything."

"Not much hurried, considering that you have been just an hour and a half in the grounds," answered her ladyship. "But, as the park is not going to run away, you can make out your appointment with Captain Ashbrook some other day, Miss Rosabel; and then he can shew you the decoy."

She raised her voice with malicious intent, and the design took effect; for at the words "appointment" and "decoy," immediately two heads were popped out of the carriage window.

Lady Lovaine, who hated Mrs. Waldegrave, as sisters-in-law can hate sisters-in-law, and who could not be troubled with Miss Alice, took an especial pleasure in defeating any of their schemes.



"Your niece," she said, putting in her head at the window, "can come some other morning to see the pictures, and the petrifying well on the terrace, and the decoy. They have found so much to say to each other between the yew hedges, that there is not time now."

"Charlotte shall have that honour, it will be her turn," said Mrs. Waldegrave. "Rosa, you are keeping her ladyship standing."

"Besides," said Rosabel, just as she was stepping into the carriage, "I shall be at Drayfield."

"Drayfield? Well, that is only four miles off. Captain Ashbrook can drive the phaeton over for you, as he is here six days out of the seven. Good morning, Penelope; I hope you will enjoy your drive home. I like your niece vastly. We must all go to this ball, I suppose, next week. Keep your windows up," she screamed, as the carriage drove off—"don't allow a thorough air."

The carriage drove off without her ladyship's being able to catch the sounds of Mrs. Waldegrave's reply; and she had therefore not the additional gratification of some fresh source of abuse of her sister-in-law, which she would

have derived from the intelligence that Rosabel was not yet to be allowed to share in the approaching gaieties. Mrs. Waldegrave left Medlicote by no means in high good humour. Aunt Alice was tired, Vicky was cold, and Rosabel could only console herself for angry looks with the reflection that Drayfield was only four miles off from Medlicote. She did not, however, attain the end of her journey without a stern reproof from Mrs. Waldegrave for having mentioned to Lady Lovaine the place of her destination.

"How she could suppose it would interest her ladyship to know what she did, or where she went; or how she could have the courage to speak out as she did before mere strangers?—She was sure Lady Lovaine must think she had been brought up in a very extraordinary style."

An arrogant reply would, at an earlier period, have arisen to Rosabel's lips; but she had learned to check the useless and irritating response in which, in former days, she had indulged her girlish propensity to impertinence; and, remembering that the moment of her separation from her aunt was at hand, she preserved

a calmness of demeanour which, as Mrs. Waldegrave soon afterwards assured her, was far more insulting than words.

At length the carriage turned away from the main road, and drove down a narrow, sequestered lane, thickly hedged in with the maple, now reddened by the advance of autumn, and the nut-tree, whose yellow leaves carpeted the path-way. Drayfield, with its blue smoke ascending through the trees, soon appeared in view. It was a substantial stone house, of some antiquity, and so far of a respectable appearance that an adjacent farm-yard, with large modern barns, and cow-sheds, appeared, as they really were, an inconsistent appendage to its former dignity as the residence of a private gentleman. To the right were the old-fashioned stables, as lofty as the house, and built to correspond, with pointed gable ends, a fan upon the cupola top, and a clock, which was now mute and out of repair, upon its front. The approach led over a field which still had the character of a lawn, though one or two cart-horses, and a calf or two, were grazing on it. The garden had the remains of by-gone ornament, on the relics of which the hand of utility

had stamped its progress. The grass was smooth-shaven near the house; but a plot of potatoe-ground, between its more comely portion and the field, disfigured, and, as Mrs. Waldegrave said, vulgarized it. The hill to the right behind the house had been framed, in former times, into terraces, to a certain height, and a portly summer-house, heptangular and with a point, and mounted so high upon its stone basements that it seemed to command the hill itself, was still allowed to retain its use, or its no use. But beneath, by a little skirting shrubbery, and on a grass-plot whereon the delicate *Euominus* cast, at this period of the year, its shell-like calyxes, and contrasting with the red stems of the Service-tree, clothes were hanging out to dry, and clothes not either of a creditable description, but elaborate smock-frocks, blue aprons, cheese-cloths, and house-cloths, and all the family of dusters flying about in the gale. Rosabel, however, never thought that Drayfield could have been so welcome to her as it was at this moment. She quitted the carriage without one pang, emancipated from angry looks and lectures, and, curtsying to both her aunts, and sending her duti-

ful love to her father, entered the retired abode without even curiosity inducing her to stop to hear the minute directions for her superintendence which Mrs. Waldegrave was pouring into the attentive ear of Mrs. Rivers. A blazing fire, although the season was still mild, had been lighted to give an air of comfort to the apartment intended for her use. It was a spacious, square room, in the depths of which were a horsehair-stuffed black settee, and a spinet, three-cornered, more sonorous than harmonious. The walls, which shewed that the apartment had formerly been appropriated to goodly purposes, were hung with a handsome, old-fashioned flock paper, of a dark purple flower, and tobacco-coloured ground. Here and there were old family pictures, such as had not been deemed worthy of removing to the hall, when Drayfield was converted into a farm-house or Grange. An indifferent copy or two of some of Sir John's ancestors, or the portraits of sundry even of his honourable house, who had disgraced themselves in any way, were still permitted to hide themselves and their shame in this now obscure abode. Rosabel recognized, with a hasty glance, the semblance of her

great-aunt Rosabel, to whom she had often been compared in her delinquencies, and whose fate Mrs. Waldegrave had assured her would be hers, for she had disgraced herself by a lowly marriage, and had died heart-broken. Some ancient gentlemen, collateral branches, the carmine of whose faces had long since faded to a paleness ashy as their powdered toupees, with the relief of a modern kitkat of Mr. and Mrs. Rivers in their best suits—she in a flat-crowned, fly-away hat, garnished out with blue ribbons, he in his flaxen, curled wig, and single-breasted, light drab coat—broke the long line of wall ; whilst over the chimney-piece a large mirror, the only defect of which was its opacity, with gilded shells and cornucopias at the top, revived the notion of former splendours, of which it seemed to offer a dim reflection.

Howard, the sole companion of Rosabel in her solitude, was playing by a table, looking more infantile by contrast with the dark figures of his ancestors around him. Rosabel hailed the small, neat tea-service, on a round claw table, so indicative of comfort and attention ; and looked with pleasure upon the little silver tea-canisters, the pride of Mrs. Rivers's heart.

Here she was sole monarch, here at least she was free, and she began to congratulate herself upon her emancipation from perpetual trivial restraints, and to wonder that she should ever have felt reluctant to come to Drayfield.

## CHAPTER X.

This morning, like the spirit of a youth  
That means to be of note, begins betimes.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE ensuing day was bright and mild, and Rosabel was awakened early by the busy, joyous notes of the poultry under her windows, the lowing of bullocks, the monotonous sound of the flail in the threshing-barn, and the equally monotonous call of the Guinea fowl on the terrace slope. She arose and walked forth. All nature seemed in unison with the harbingers of the morning, whose triumphant expressions of instinctive joy had disturbed her slumbers. The gossamer, it is true, still silvered the hedges, and encompassed with its fairy veil even the lowliest weed : the distant prospect was wrapt in mist ; but on the grass enclosure, near the house, the broad gleams of a steady and powerful sunshine had already dispersed the dew.



Rosabel called Howard forth to accompany her, and, passing through a wicket into a well-known path, which led from the back of the house to the hill behind, began to ascend the eminence. As she raised her eyes to a clump of fir trees at the summit, she admired the contrast of their dark foliage with the unspeckled blue of the firmament seen through their branches, and above the slender sprays of their tasselled, waving tops.

Rosabel's notions of religious gratitude were, as yet, quite undefined: the habit of tracing every enjoyment to the highest Source, had never been cultivated in her mind by any watchful care. She looked upon nature with a pleasure rather instinctive, than intellectual. The gladdening thought, that universal benevolence, as well as universal beauty, pervades the universe, had not yet enhanced her enjoyment of rural scenes. Yet, her young mind being left to itself, it did occur to her, as she looked around upon the deep repose of the fields, that the hand of man had left indeed its traces upon their cultivated enclosures, but that some more powerful and still more pervading spirit was also visible there.

The acclivity which she presently ascended commanded a distant glimpse both of Medlicote Park, and of a turn in the road which led down to Hales Hall. Rosabel reflected that her earliest thoughts and tenderest affections ought to be addressed to the home of her father and of her brothers and sisters; nevertheless she fixed her eyes with much solicitude upon what appeared to be the grey chimney-tops of Medlicote, rendered more distinct by the contrast of the yellow outline of the trees which encompassed them. A new interest seemed added to her existence: how, she knew not; but she was young and visionary, and had been much secluded from intellectual intercourse, and almost wholly debarred from kindly and gentle communion with others. She felt, therefore, an inordinate and unwarrantable degree of gratitude to Lady Lovaine and Captain Ashbrook for their passing attentions to her; and the idea that she was not so low in common estimation as she always had been assured, and the hope of being able to make herself agreeable to some one or other, inspired her, for the first time, with the ambition to please, and with a motive for rendering herself wor-

thy of being liked. Whilst these reflections passed through her mind, Howard, who had made a little solitary excursion within the limited paths of the wood, came back to call her attention to certain moving objects which had been quickly caught by the fleet glance of infancy. They were a straggling party of huntsmen, whose scarlet coats enhanced the rich hues of the woody glen through which they rode, by a dazzling contrast.

"Look, Rosa, look," cried Howard; "and I must go down to the lane to see them near—I dare say Mr. Rivers is among them."

Rosabel, however, endeavoured to stay his impatience, by assuring him that the huntsmen were probably only going to the place of rendezvous, and that, when the sport was over, they would perhaps, at least many of them, be returning the same way in the afternoon; and a sense of propriety, which, like most young persons of honourable mind, she felt more strongly when left to her own guidance than when others were responsible for her conduct, prevented her from complying with Howard's request to run down with him to the near neighbourhood of the sportsmen: she waited

until all were passed, before she again sought the pathway which conducted them to the Grange.

But, in the afternoon, circumstances did not permit her to be so prudent. Howard, who had not forgotten her assurance, and who was wearied with having nothing to do, was watching to ensnare Rosabel to the gate which led into the lane, by those childish pretexts which the ingenuity of infancy knows well how to urge. It was "Rosa, come here," and "Rosa, go there ;" "Rosa, get me a whip from that tree near the gate," or "Rosa, I want to see the cows come from milking ;—until, about four o'clock, Rosabel was absolutely inveigled into Howard's favourite position near the gate. She was without either bonnet or shawl, and was in the act of pulling a branch from a beech tree, to please Howard, when a sound of horses' feet behind her startled her. She turned, and saw a party of gentlemen hunters riding leisurely down the lane. Her glance at them was momentary ; but they, supposing that she could be nobody but the farmer's pretty daughter, were not sparing in their notice of her, or observations upon her. Rosabel felt the more confused

at this little occurrence, that she was habituated to the strict seclusion of her father's park, where unbidden feet never entered ; and, taking Howard by the hand, she walked towards the house ;—but, in a few minutes, one of the horse-men entered the gate, and rode after her.

“ I am not then mistaken,” said the intruder ; and Rosabel, her face crimsoning as she turned round, saw Captain Ashbrook. He stopped his horse, and she stood still—both then looking as if they knew not what to say.

As usual, the weather became a refuge for those destitute of the small coin of ready talk.

“ You are enjoying this fine afternoon—and your brother too ;”—Captain Ashbrook glanced around him as he spoke ;—“ I have often passed this place,” he said, “ but did not know that Sir John still kept it in his own hands.”

“ No,” replied Rosabel, “ he does not ; but Mrs. Rivers, the bailiff's wife, has been accustomed to take charge of us here, now and then, ever since we were children : when there was the small-pox at Hales, we were all sent here ; and now, Howard having a fever, I”——

“ You are sent to nurse him,” said Captain Ashbrook, taking up the unfinished sentence.

"But are you not rather dull here? Is not the seclusion more complete than is agreeable at your age?"

"Not more than at home; you know I am considered too young to enter into public amusements."

"But not too young to be alone here," Captain Ashbrook was about to say, but he checked himself.

"Drayfield is quite a home to me—a second home—Mrs. Rivers is so kind, and I am so accustomed to every nook and corner——"

"You know each dingle and bosky dell, I dare say; and since you are fond of reading—doubtless—pray can I bring you any additional books from Medlicote: what do you like?"

"Why, if you please, do not bring me any thing very serious—nor yet any thing very, very frivolous:—I have, for instance, with me the *Lady's Magazine*," replied Rosabel.

"—Which is a positive affront to the female understanding," said Captain Ashbrook; "made up, if I remember—for I have not seen it since I came from America—of wretched tales, love sonnets, and enigmas; the King and Queen described in conundrums. In one number, a

letter from a lady requesting a cure for the cramp; in the next, her thanks for the remedy.”—

“And ending,” added Rosabel, “with little songs, and patterns of work-bags and flounces. I never was a great worker.”

“Nor must I bring you either the Gentleman’s Magazine—dry, close, fatiguing reading, indeed; all agreeable subjects abridged and cut down in it, and those of a recondite nature expatiated upon with a wordy minuteness—*that* will not do. Will you trust me to explore the Medlicote library, and to make a selection which I think you will like?”

Rosabel was only too happy to assent; and Captain Ashbrook, after lingering some ten minutes longer, departed; not without some difficulty in regaining possession of his horse, on which Howard had, during the conversation, been mounted, and lead about; and Rosabel was left again to her solitude—a solitude enhanced by one of the pleasantest recollections upon which her enthusiastic spirit had rested. Circumstances had thrown her into a position of almost intimate communication with one, upon whom her youthful fancy had long rested

with romantic interest. She remembered the time when she should have thought herself fortunate to have casually seen him at Hales Hall ; she, perhaps, at the bottom of the table, and he at the top. And now, yesterday to have walked with him, to-day to have met him again, seemed all a pleasant day-dream to her.

But Captain Ashbrook knew too well what the misconstructions of the world might be, and had too much innate delicacy and sense of propriety, to repeat his visit to Rosabel in her solitary situation. He took such means of rendering that solitude less irksome to her as his kind heart suggested, by interesting Lady Lovaine in her favour.

“ Just like them, Ashbrook,” said Lady Lovaine, when her nephew told her of his rencontre—“ just like Mrs. Waldegrave—just like that goose, Alice Fortescue. So ! they want to keep this poor girl out of the way whilst Miss Charlotte is put forward, forsooth, as a marketable commodity.—Drayfield—the child—a mighty good excuse ! The very worst place in the world for a milliary fever—damp—cold—low—”

“ What a strange, unjust partiality ! And



to leave her in a farm-house at this season! when one knows farm-houses are never secluded; and so lovely a girl too!"

"Is she handsome?" asked Lady Lovaine, carelessly; "for there are such a host of those Fortescues, that I never can tell one from the other. But this is the one that ran away once, distracted by my sweet sister Waldegrave's over-virtuousness, and silly Alice's weak compliances."

"Is she really, really, Lady Lovaine, *that* Miss Fortescue?—I thought so, I guessed it. Good heavens! to drive so lovely a being to that!" exclaimed Captain Ashbrook, indignantly.

"Now, if there is one thing that can give me more pleasure than another, Ashbrook, it is to disappoint the manoeuvres of the saintly Penelope—saintly as her namesake of old, who, in my opinion, was all humbug."

"At any rate, dear my lady, do be so very kind—and you know no one does more for the good of society than yourself—do, therefore, kindly drive over to visit this ill-fated young lady—in whom I protest I feel an unusual interest."

“ So I see ; and the good which you, and most of your age, will do, Ashbrook, will usually find some such objects—charitable at a small expense, inclination concurring. Now, if you took in hand a few of my blind old women—at the Almshouses—”

“ But I never could take old women in hand : however, I agree with you ; it is quite a duty. Even the young and fair must be old in time ; and I may live to say, of the charming Rosabel,

Those snowy locks, once auburn bright,  
Are now more precious in my sight  
Than golden hues of orient light.”

“ Well, well ; you act better than you talk,” said Lady Lovaine ; “ and that is what one cannot say of Mrs. Waldegrave—narrow-minded, sanctimonious— Well, to-morrow, I will set off, to oblige you, Ashbrook,—and to vex *her*.”

## CHAPTER XI.

————— such are the rich,  
That have abundance and enjoy it not

ROSABEL was on the terrace walk, on the following day, when Howard cried out to her—

“ Look, Rosa, look ; here’s a gentleman with a long petticoat coming to see you.”

Whilst he spoke, Lady Lovaine, followed by a servant, rode towards the house. Her ladyship was attired in her accustomed hat, and cravat, and a scarlet riding habit. Her costume, however, had nothing remarkable about it, according to the fashion of the times ; it was her unfeminine aspect which rendered her conspicuous. Rosabel, however, thought little of any thing but the kindness which brought her ladyship to see her, and, running down from the terrace, her face glowing with pleasure,

gave Lady Lovaine a reception far more cordial than ceremonious.

“What have they buried you here for?” was her ladyship’s first exclamation. “Is not Hales Hall dull enough? I am sure it is like Noah’s ark, except that no couples go in there, nor go out either. It is all single blessedness there. So! you are head nurse, I suppose. Do they want you to marry the farmer’s son? What can Mrs. Waldegrave be about?”

Lady Lovaine was one of those persons who are quite independant of that part of conversation termed reply: she played the intellectual shuttle-cock single-handed: her discourse was all a monologue.

“My Lord’s very unwell to-day—cased in wash-leather by my advice—he’s a heap of gout and flannel. Ill—six days out of the seven—complains of cold legs—which I think a very bad symptom—shocking! I am so occupied, I can never get out; but I promised Ashbrook I would call on you to-day. Good bye. This place is damp; hope you have cork soles. Well, to-morrow I shall send my coach for you, to bring you to Medicote. Mrs. Waldegrave must “sanction” it, as she calls it: I shall send

for you at twelve o'clock. I shall be very glad to see you. Don't expect me to entertain you : I have a world of business on my hands. So you are not to go to the ball to-night ? Poor Cinderella!"—

"I would much rather go to Medlicote to-morrow," said Rosabel : but Lady Lovaine rode off, without seeming to notice her.

She left Rosabel quite elated, and resolved to go to Medlicote, even if an express came direct to forbid her ; which was scarcely possible. She climbed the hill with renovated spirits, and looked along the richly wooded country towards Hales Hall, with many a wistful conjecture, even in her present elation, as to what might be going on there. "By this time," thought she, "the company expected to dinner are beginning to arrive. Papa is looking very stately in the great drawing room. Aunt Waldegrave is in her best satins, and best humour too, I suppose. Aunt Alice is all smiles ; and Charlotte — Charlotte," thought she, with something like a sigh, "is all in her ball gaiety, I fancy, looking very well. I wonder whether Captain Ashbrook will ask her to dance the first set with him or not."

Thus musing, and descending the hill with a step less bounding than that with which she had set out, Rosabel returned to the Grange, feeling somewhat more solitary than usual, by the contrast furnished by her own imagination of the social pleasures which at this time gladdened her home. She drew near to her temporary residence, and looked, with feelings approaching to envy, into the spacious house-place, or hall, in which the farmer and his family were now assembled. The blaze of a large wood fire streamed through the ample, though latticed window, and reddened even the slender leaves of the privet bushes which grew near the house; and Rosabel could see the venerable head of Mrs. Rivers's father, as he basked in the warmth on a settle within the chimney enclosure: and she could hear sounds of mirthful voices, and the clatter of tea cups; and she felt that she only, of all the inhabitants of the old house, was indeed alone, and precluded from the fellowship of kindred souls. "My father loves me," thought she—"why does he then permit the unnatural partiality which is shown to my elder sister, sowing the seeds of disunion and of jealousy between us? Did he

not receive me, repentant and faulty as I was, and assure me that it should never more be thus? And Charlotte too—oh, Charlotte! if you were generous and kind, you might open his eyes to the unfairness with which I am treated; but your very nature is altered too!”

She walked into the parlour, and tried to compose herself to read, or to needle-work, which Mrs. Waldegrave had supplied abundantly. Youth is ever buoyant; and the circumstances which would cruelly depress us in middle age are sustained in early life with an uprising spirit which has the semblance and effect of heroism, but which is only elasticity. Rosabel, after a few moments of abstraction and seriousness, began to read, and soon felt her spirits refreshed, and her fortitude replenished, by the instant change of ideas, which made a recurrence to her grievances less poignant. Howard was tired, and not well, and had been taken early to bed; she therefore had her tea alone, her candles were lighted, her fire replenished, and the darkness of night closed around Drayfield without her marking the leaden foot of time. In the absence of all distracting objects, she had become en-

grossed by her book, when footsteps, quite close to the house, the sound of voices, not altogether plebeian, and the occasional tingling of a bell, gleams of light breaking in through the crevices of the old shutters, disturbed and perhaps alarmed her: yet she rose from her studies with that sort of half enjoyment which the prospect of an adventure, be it fearful, or be it innocent, produces in a long and dull evening. A tap at the door announced the entrance of Mrs. Rivers.

"I came to tell you, Miss Rosabel, dear, not to be frightened,—and would you like to see the bat-fowling?"

"Indeed I should," cried Rosabel: "My hat and cloak are both here—but stay, I shall put on my cloak only, as the hood will serve me for a bonnet, and I shall see the sport better. Come along, Mrs. Rivers. How delightful! I could not think what it was."

"Take my arm, dear Miss Rosa. You know I have been trusted with you ever since you could walk alone, and I'll take care now as no one sees you."

"Who are they? Are they gentlemen—or farmers"—Rosabel was going to say; but na-



tural courtesy prevented her from drawing the invidious distinction.

"They've got young Warner among them ; may be you won't reckon him a gentleman ; his grandfather has mended many a saddle for my father in his day ; he was a saddler at Derby, and the rest are all half-and-half gentlemen ; my own son's among them, Miss Rosa."

"Perhaps," said Rosabel, drawing back, "I had better not go, Mrs. Rivers."

"Why not, dear Miss Rosa ? They shall none on 'em see you, and nobody shan't be the wiser ; come along—did you never see the sport ?"

"Never," returned Rosabel, whose prudence was fast failing her ; and, leaning on the ample support of Mrs. Rivers's well-covered arm, she sallied forth, by the back way, into the garden.

The party assembled to participate in this ancient but somewhat cowardly diversion were, as Mrs. Rivers and Rosabel passed behind them, engaged in silently fastening a large net over the trees which grew against the house, and in which sparrows and other small birds, victims of the sport, had settled themselves to

roost. Mrs. Rivers and Rosabel planted themselves under the shadow of a large *Arbutus*, the remains of former garden cultivation, and, standing apart, the gleams of light which played upon the turf, or flickered on the gravel walk, reached them not.

The party collected were of that class, the farmers of old times, before an altered position in society, and artificial habits, had broken up their real enjoyments, and had produced needless anxieties, the offspring of newly created wants, and of profusion and ambition. Bird-batting, or bat-fowling, or low-belling, by which last name it was anciently called, was a certain method of ensnaring small birds, and being somewhat ignoble both in its object and in the mode of pursuing it, was never, I believe, a prevalent sport among the higher classes. The group who now collected around Mr. Rivers's house were furnished with two nets; one of the men carrying a lanthorn, so contrived as to be shaded by a large socket or dish before he reached the place of action, held also in his hand a large bell, which, with the aid of the lanthorn, so astounded the poor little birds, that, turning their bodies quickly round,

the light plumage on their breasts was visible. Then the gentlemen of the net quickly secured their victims. The sport was pursued thus early in the evening, because the moon was to rise at eight; and the darker the night, the better the diversion. The managers of the net were forced to climb the tree; and many a suppressed laugh broke forth when, the light being suddenly displayed, and the bell raised aloft and sounded, the helpless victims were seen fruitlessly struggling between the meshes of the nets. Then they were consigned to the baskets, and in those temporary dungeons confined, until anon their little necks were wrung in the farmer's kitchen. This pastime, more honoured in the disuse than the observance, is still practised in the agricultural midland counties of England, and probably will be considered interesting only as the remnant of one of those ancient diversions which, before manufactures had defaced the land, engaged the yeomanry of England. Whether we have any thing better in the place of these now neglected pastimes—whether the bulk of the population are happier, because a few individuals of that population are richer—is not readily to be determined.

Rosabel, however, thought little upon these matters ; she was only wearied with the sound of the bell, and longed to rescue every fresh victim from the merciless grasp of its destroyer. The moon, however, began, in reproving majesty, to shine: the sport was over, and the party hastened to Mr. Rivers's kitchen, according to custom ; for great was the good cheer, and uniform the hospitality, at that time exercised in farm-houses.

Mrs. Rivers, with many apologies, left Rosabel at the door ; and the latter was in no humour for going within, for the silence of the garden, after its previous bustle, rendered it delightful. Unperceived, therefore, she stole out again : it was scarcely eight o'clock ; and in those peaceful regions she felt no fear in wandering about the farmer's domain, especially as the hunting moon, as it is called, had now risen, shedding upon the terrace slope that fulness of light from which warmth, as well as cheerfulness, is fancied by some to be derived. Rosabel was suddenly inspired, she knew not why, with a wish to walk down to the gate where she had seen Captain Ashbrook, and to return by the walk to the house which

they had paced together; and she was so unaccustomed to refrain from anything of this sort that she took it into her head to do, that she set off, reached the gate, looked out into the darkness of the lane, overshadowed with hedge-row trees, and was returning, in her usual bounding pace, to the farm, when the sounds of voices and moans of suffering met her ear. She stopped—all was silent—she walked a few steps onwards—the sounds were again heard—in a few moments she saw figures approaching, evidently men who had emerged from the lane, and who were walking towards the house. Panic-struck, she fled, and, looking back once only, thought she saw the two figures quickening their pace towards her. She ran round the house to the back door, which she shook by the latch, crying out, “Mrs. Rivers, here are two men, open the door.”

Her request was instantly complied with, and Rosabel plunged suddenly into the centre of a group of farmers and farmers’ sons, who were assembled round an oak table: she retreated with as much precipitation as she had entered, vexed with herself for her foolish fears.

"They are only beggars, I dare say, Mrs. Rivers; but they did walk so slow first, as if creeping in, and then so fast"—

"There they are at the front door," cried Mrs. Rivers; "trampers, I'll be bound, or Irish harvesters, come begging.—Why, you're fairly out of breath, Miss Rosabel."

By this time, there was a violent knocking at the front door. Mrs. Rivers, a stout, courageous woman, disdaining the assistance of her husband, or of her son John, snatched up a candle, and, sallying forth from the little parlour into which she had shewn Rosabel, marched towards the besieged entrance, Rosabel following her at a little distance.

"My name is Middleton," said a voice, not plebeian, "and my companion is Mr. Henry Warner; he fell from his horse a mile or two from here. I fear his arm is broken. The horse was startled by some gypsies, who ran across the path. Will you give him house-room till I can get assistance?"

"House-room, oh, yes! that was never denied, here," was Mrs. Rivers's ready reply, in all the pride of hospitality. "Good patience! how ill he looks! John, come here! why don't

you ? fetch opoldedoc ; quick, in the cupboard to the right hand, on the left shelf, in my spare house.—Dolly, a plaget of lint directly—quick, be ready—Roger, the gentleman's fainting, get salts and the brandy-bottle—James, run for the doctor ; mind the bog, if you go across the common—quick—Oh ! it's only three miles, sir. Miss Rosabel, dear, might I just ask the gentleman to step into your room, as there's the settee, and we haven't a scrap of room in the house-place, and"—

"Do you think I could refuse ?" cried Rosabel—"pray come in directly. I am afraid he is very, very much hurt."

"I will see to it," said Mrs. Rivers ; "don't be alarmed, sir—there, open the window—lie down flat—shut your eyes, whilst I look at the arm. Oh ! after all, the bone is not come through the skin ; you'll not have to lose your arm ; I have seen worse hurts, sir."

"Thank God !" exclaimed Rosabel. "I am very, very glad."

Young Warner, in pain as he was, looked earnestly at her.

"Miss Rosabel Fortescue," he said, with evident pleasure — for the strange mode in

which Rosabel had first been introduced to his family, had been the prelude to an occasional visiting on both sides, in which her warmth of heart, her gratitude, and freedom from the little airs which Charlotte had displayed, had rendered Rosabel a general favourite with the Warner family. Their interviews had not, it is true, been frequent ; but the Miss Warners had, now and then, passed what is called a long day at the Hall, and Rosabel had gone several times, by special permission, to Fairford.

Mrs. Rivers, of good, homely, practical knowledge, knew that all that could be done, until the surgeon arrived, was to keep down inflammation. Then the arm must afterwards be set, and the patient composed to rest. She prepared a cooling application, and was about to bathe the arm with it, when Rosabel said, timidly, " Since I can be of no use here, can I write to Mr. Warner, or any of the family, to apprize them of the accident ? They will, I fear, be very much alarmed at Mr. Henry Warner's not returning home, and"—

" You are very good," said Mr. Middleton ; " but Henry was to have slept at our house to-night ; it is only four miles hence. I will



return home when I have heard the opinion of the surgeon, and to-morrow it will be soon enough, as the accident is not dangerous, we trust, to agitate poor Mr. Warner's mind : ill tidings always fly fast enough."

"It is worth while," said Henry Warner, falteringly, as Rosabel left the room, "to be hurt, to have such sympathy."

Rosabel was glad that she had this little opportunity of shewing any slight attention to any member of the Warner family, towards whom she had very kindly feelings, which only wanted more frequent intercourse to ripen them into friendship.

Excited by the events of the day, it was long before she could compose herself sufficiently, after this adventure, to retire to bed. Some hours afterwards, when she had fallen asleep, she was awakened by the tramping of the surgeon's horse under her window, and, in the morning, the first tidings that greeted her, were, that Mr. Henry Warner had had his arm set, and was doing well : then a series of bulletins followed, whilst she breakfasted in Mrs. Rivers's own spare parlour : this was an apartment six feet by ten, with polished oak floor ; varnished

by the industry of some neat-handed Phillis, even to the point of slipperiness ; its furniture consisting of a round claw table, bright, but not commodious, four ponderous oak arm-chairs, and a small square carpet in the centre of the room ;—an old-fashioned buffet, garnished with egg-shell china, stood at one end. About, around, were the insignia of the sportsmen, and of the farmer's occupations ; a pair of pistols hung over the chimney-piece, protecting as it were the profiles of Mrs. Rivers's father and mother, in black, shaded with gold touches ; a sampler with Adam and Eve, an apple-tree between them, Miss Rivers's first essay in the fine arts, and quills worked by some careful hands in silk overcasting, again betokened the pervading influence of the feminine gender ; a stuffed owl decorated another corner, an emblem of wisdom, counter-balanced by a Canadian goose, also immortalized, in the opposite extremity. Rosabel, early accustomed to the simple, antiquated, and perhaps vulgar tastes of her host and hostess, little indeed regarded what was within the house. Her attention was fixed upon the back-way entrance,

and upon the variations which its circumscribed limits presented.

The farm-yard denizens were all in activity : the team was coming in, hot and panting, from the early ploughing ; a few cows were still permitted to linger among the fodder ; the great bull bellowed lugubriously in the stall, through the half-opened door of which his short but ponderous legs were visible. To his grumblings the large house-mastiff howled responsively, whilst a concert in tenor notes from ducks, geese, hens, chickens, gallinas, and turkeys, filled up every pause. The slow, yet unlooked-for entrance of a yellow chariot, drawn by two post horses, occasioned a revolution in a scene which was rural without being tranquil. The cows fled, the chickens flew screaming, the ducks were run over, the turkeys gave out bravuras, the mastiff barked with a vehemence which seemed to border upon human spite.

In the midst of this tumult, bottles of wine, a medicine chest, some pillows, and a blanket, were carried out, and brought into Mrs. Rivers's parlour, by an attendant spirit.

"Mr. Warner, and the Miss Warners, are arrived, to see Mr. Henry," was the intelligence which accompanied this unloading ; and, not long afterwards, the further announcement of "if you please, Miss Rosabel, the Miss Warners wish to see you," was followed by the entrance of those young ladies into the room.

They were, as was proper, in tears, and exhibiting all the insignia of distress at their brother's accident. "Poor Henry, poor dear Henry, how shocking, how distressing, poor dear soul, oh, dear me!" were for some moments the only sounds which broke upon the sympathizing ear of Rosabel. Phillis, the elder sister, was the first to recover from the paroxysm of a sorrow not deadly. She was what is called a strong-minded young woman, a person of clear judgment, decided opinions, and regulated feelings. Looked up to by a numerous family of sisters and brothers, Phillis had early learned to regard her own opinion as infallible, her determinations as a sort of final court of judicature, from which there was no appeal. She had much of her father's self-sufficiency, with more good nature

and sensibility than he possessed. As she thought highly of herself, so she judged severely of others. Every thing that came not up to her own standard of right was condemned unrelentingly ; herself, her father, and her own family, personified this standard, and embodied her abstract notions of propriety of conduct, perfection of judgment, and importance.

Amy, her sister, was the mental slave of Phillis—her shadow, and, like shadows, magnified the object which she followed. To repeat her sister's sentiments, echo and re-echo her opinions, imitate, in a weak, faint way, her decided assertions, and pin the whole of her faith upon her sister's responsibility, was the vocation of humble Amy. This veneration on the part of Amy, Phillis returned with affectionate interest ; for Amy was pretty, the Cynosure of gentlemen farmers, attorneys, clerks, young apothecaries, and hopeless curates. At present, the Warners were only in a third-rate county set, and Amy had not yet tasted the danger of any fleeting attentions from Captain Ashbrook, or the Mr. Fortescues.

But to return to Mrs. Rivers's parlour. After a due course of sympathetics, the young ladies

began to recover their spirits. First, they amended upon the strength of a good luncheon ; then they revived more completely over a blazing fire ; and, afterwards, rose into high spirits upon the discussion of a ball ; especially as Mr. Warner was safely bestowed, talking to his son, whom he proposed to harangue upon the carelessness which had produced his present accident, and the good fortune which had saved him from losing his arm ; an exordium from which the young ladies were not sorry to escape.

## CHAPTER XII.

“ Think not I love him, though I ask for him—  
 ————— words do well,  
 When he that speaks them pleases those that hear.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“ THE ball? Oh, yes! it was delightful,” observed Amy in reply to a question from Rosabel.

“ I do not,” said Phillis, “ consider it to have been a good ball at all.”

“ Don’t you, indeed ?” cried Amy.

“ Neither of the county members was there,” pursued Phillis, “ though their families were : —the gentlemen were nothing but a collection of fox-hunters—the ladies held themselves insufferably high—and there was quite a commotion in the room, from Lady Lovaine’s taking Miss Crompton, Lord S———s’ natural daughter, from the top of the set, where she had placed herself, and telling her that her place ought to be at the bottom.”

“Very right, to be sure,” said Amy, modestly —“but what a fright that Lady Lovaine is.”

“Papa cannot endure her,” said Phillis; “she has affronted Papa:—as for poor Lord Lovaine, he is very harmless. And then her nephew, Captain Ashbrook, is become so very high—no one fit to dance with him but a Townsend, or a Fortescue, or a Percival.”

“He asked me to dance one set, but I was engaged,” interposed Amy, in a subdued tone.

“He knew you were engaged,” returned Phillis; “and he was too much occupied with somebody else to desire it;—talking to one person the whole night.”

“Was he?” enquired Rosabel, colouring slightly. “But who were the belles of the room? How were the ladies, in general, dressed? It will be quite an entertainment to me, I assure you, to hear any particulars, however trifling. How were you yourself dressed, Phillis; and you, Amy? And how did Charlotte look?”

“Oh! Miss Fortescue, as Miss Fortescue, must always be admired,” said Phillis coldly, “being who and what she is, and introduced by ladies of such quality as Mrs. Waldegrave and



Miss Alice——Though they are your aunts, I must say they are uncommonly haughty, Rosabel.”

“I am sorry you should ever find them so, dear Phillis :—but you know ’tis born with the Fortescues. Charlotte had her pearls, my mother’s pearls on, had she not? Were buffonts worn? And did she dance with Captain Ashbrook?”

“Yes, I think she did; did she not, Amy? twice, did she? I cannot say I considered Miss Fortescue to be the belle of the room, though people called her so.”

“Who was then the reigning beauty?” asked Rosabel, anxiously. “The Miss Goodyers, were they there? Does Captain Ashbrook know them?”

“Perhaps he does—not that his attentions were bestowed in that quarter,” replied Phillis.

“Then in what quarter were they bestowed,” cried Rosabel, impatiently, her natural frankness getting the better of her prudence :—“how can you be so tantalizing, Phillis?”

Phillis laughed, and so did Amy, and so did Rosabel.

“You have no chance, Rosabel,” said Miss

Warner; "all the world says that the heir of the Lovaine estates is to marry a Fortescue, and a Fortescue it is to be :—he was even (the object of his real attention being otherwise disposed of) flirting with Miss Alice all night."

"That was on Charlotte's account then, I am sure," said Rosabel; "I have no doubt it is quite a settled thing."

"I am certain he has no preference in that quarter," cried Phillis, warmly, and Amy of course seconded her—"in that quarter? No! I am positive that Captain Ashbrook has no preference to *Miss* Fortescue."

"Poor Captain Ashbrook," answered Rosabel with a smile and a blush, is transferred from one lady to another according to our imaginations, like a shuttle-cock, and after all——"

"After all," said Phillis, "may die an old bachelor; and, I think, will."

"I think so too," added Amy.

"However, he looked vastly well," pursued Miss Warner, "last night, in a bloom-coloured coat, embroidered down the sleeves, and with frogs at the button holes."

"But I am glad," said her sister, "he has

not adopted the new rams' horn curl, so odious."

"Really," cried Rosabel, "you make me quite sensible how much out of the world I live : I know nothing of these modern fashions."

"Then you have not seen *frivolité*," exclaimed Amy, eagerly ; the most lovely trimming!—and mixed with feathers—quite enchanting!"

"I like no trimming but the drooping willow, feather trimming," observed Phillis, imperiously. "It would be as well, I think, if Miss Fortescue were not to be the very first in the county to set the fashion of leaving off the apron—not quite the thing, as Papa says."

"Nor Miss Alice ! Rosabel, forgive the remark. Fancy your aunt Alice, with top-knots of Elliott's red-hot bullets—the new ribbon, all the rage," remarked Amy.

"Like a bunch of poppies, I should think," said Rosabel.—

"Upon stubble," added Phillis, "which your aunt's hair, powdered, and set up with that charming little fringe of locks which she wears to shade her forehead, is not unlike."

"Mrs. Waldegrave's lappets were twisted with pearl," resumed Amy, after the three young ladies were fairly exhausted with their irreverent merriment upon aunt Alice's hair.

"And her spangles all tarnished," said Phillis, "having been shut up for half a century, I dare say."

Their discourse was interrupted by a summons from Mr. Warner, and a request that Miss Rosabel Fortescue would allow his son the honour of thanking her for her attention on the preceding evening. Mr. Warner was now in a great hurry to depart, and it seemed as if he anticipated the worst public results likely to occur from his mind being so much engrossed by domestic concerns.

"A man like me, in a public capacity, Miss Rosabel, should have no private business of his own to attend to. When poor Mrs. Warner was alive, all these things were managed for me. Really a man like myself should have nothing to harass him at home:—I meet with mischief, roguery, and trouble enough out of doors, God knows."

"Well, sir, there is no help for these matters," said Phillis, imperatively, as, preceded by Rosa-

bel, she entered the room where her brother still lay, as on the preceding evening. Henry Warner was justly regarded by his acquaintance as the most promising member of his own family. In early life he had been wild, forward, and idle ; but the strong discipline of a college life, and an association with young men of talent and exertion, had drawn forth a capacity of no contemptible order, and repressed, if it had not cured, defects of no very serious character. He was intended for the bar, a profession which Mr. Warner had often lamented not having followed himself, cut out for it as he was, according to his own estimation. Rosabel, who had not seen Mr. Henry Warner since he had taken his degree at Cambridge, and who had scarcely glanced at him on the preceding evening, was struck at the improvement in his appearance and manner. He was a tall and gentlemanly young man, with a countenance at once intelligent and animated :—bolstered up by pillows in the enclosure of Mrs. Rivers's capacious easy chair, he thanked her for her ready surrender of her own sitting apartment with so much grace and ease of manner, he looked so very

interesting in his character of an invalid, and he appeared to be so very much obliged to herself, that Rosabel could almost have forgotten that he was not among her own privileged set, out of whose pale she had been educated to think none were gentlemen. She was interrupted in her enquiries and condolences by an announcement from Mrs. Rivers that Lady Lovaine's carriage waited to convey her to Medlicote. Having taken a hasty farewell of her friends, she ran to arrange her dress, leaving Mr. Warner much mollified by the affability of her manners to himself, Phillis and Amy more than ever her friends and partisans, and their brother disposed to admire her with as much warmth as the inferior caste of Warner could presume to feel for a Fortescue.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“ The superstructure of pride seemed bottomed upon a sense of worth.”—ELIA.

ROSABEL found Lady Lovaine in a kind of laboratory, weighing out grains of calomel, and grating rhubarb. Some camomile tea was infusing in a pipkin on the fire, and there was a compound odour of senna, gentian, and sarsaparilla. Her ladyship's maid stood by, labelling bottles, and folding little packets, which ever and anon she transferred into a small basket.

“ How are you, my dear ? You will excuse coming to me here : I am very busy ;—Laton, wrap up that bolus in wafer paper. I shall take you, Miss Fortescue, to see my villagers ; you have no idea in what capital health I keep them. Laton, do not forget the bandages, and

linen rollers for the bad legs. I use Buchan : do your aunts use Buchan ?" added she, peeping into a large open book, as she spoke.

" You don't know, indeed—you seem to be kept sadly in the dark about many things, at Hales Hall. Since some of you must marry clergymen, or squires with small estates, it would be as well for you to learn these things. The worst of it is, that the poor have such a great dislike to take medicine—they are as bad as my lord. But come, my dear, I have two women, five children, and six old men to visit."

They sallied forth, and moved towards the village at a running pace, the conversation going on in the most desultory manner, and all on one side. Lady Lovaine was quite an amateur in accidents, ailments, operations, and remedies, and could not hear of any thing connected with her favourite subject, without longing to be in the midst of the business.

" Broke an arm ? How ? When ?" demanded she, suddenly stopping, whilst Rosabel was telling her ladyship one of the adventures of the preceding evening. " What advice has he had ? My dear, I am quite sorry you did not let me



know ; I would have come over, and seen the young man this morning. What embrocation now does Mrs. Rivers use ? Was it effectual ? I must have her receipt. Does she use lint, or rag, cotton lint, or linen ?” As she spoke, they reached Medlicote, a straggling hamlet, rather than village, with here and there a bettermost kind of cottage, or a substantial farm-house, to break the lowly aspect of the scene. Human population seemed the only thing which throve here—troops of boys and girls running into the gutters, or stopping up the path-way with their little acts of reverence, irritated Lady Lovaine beyond measure.

“ Of all things, what should people have children for ?” said she, petulantly. “ Well, Nancy, how are you ? How is your mother ? What, another child ! eight ? How dare she go on so ? Tell her I am very angry with her.”

Her ladyship proceeded at a rapid pace, sometimes stopping to enquire kindly concerning the health of certain of her patients, at other times condescending to scold the thoughtless boys who were playing truant from school, and wasting their time playing marbles. On a sudden, she darted off across the road, saying to

Rosabel "come and see my school;" and, with the rapidity natural to an energetic and impetuous character, she bolted into a low-roofed edifice, where the discordant sounds of uncultured youthful voices, raised, as in low life they usually are, to their utmost pitch, made Rosabel start back, and even Lady Lovaine hold her hands for a moment to her head. There was every gradation of discord which could jar upon the senses, from the twang of boyhood, to the tremulous scream of infancy. All might be harmony and system, but confusion and unintelligible repetition were alone evident to the uninitiated spectator. A stern-visaged man, with a pen behind his ear, and a long wand of office in his hand, stood in the midst of the more advanced pupils: a woman, with a hot angry face, and corresponding tone of voice, seemed to be making some lesser victims in one corner as unhappy as infancy can be rendered—an unhappiness which ceases, at that period of life, with the cause which gives it birth.

"Is it not a pleasing sight?" said Lady Lovaine, her fine features beaming with a pleasure at once benevolent and self-approving. "This school, Miss Fortescue, is my raising:—

just think how much may be done in five years—will you hear a class? Have you a taste that way?”

“No?”

“Extraordinary! I own I cannot stand it myself: but my nerves never were strong. You know, I suppose,” she continued, as she again emerged into the main road, “that my nephew, Captain Ashbrook—Sukey, forshame now: not at school? you shall be expelled, you little sinner, for non-attendance—You know, of course, Miss Rosabel, that Captain Ashbrook is to marry?—John Hobbins, how is your rheumatism? Have you put on the plaister? Well and good; your sister?—I must just cross over to speak to widow Barnes. Now, Laton, unload—hydrarg here—with lenitive elect.”

“At least,” continued Lady Lovaine, after leaving Rosabel for a few minutes in suspense, in the middle of the road, “the world has settled it so: and now, if you wish to see a poor consumptive tailor, in the last stage, with a widow, that is to be, and three children, all in the greatest distress, follow me—don’t shrink, those cows are perfectly quiet.”

“I have now only one lumbago, and two

cases of erysipelas, to visit," pursued her ladyship, as she quitted the house of the poor tailor, who found himself too ill, as many of her patients did, to see even his patroness.

"But, perhaps this ramble is too much for you? young ladies of the present day have no constitutions; they are knocked up directly. And so, Miss Fortescue is to be, according to speculation, the lady of Ashbrook—Mrs. Waldegrave's Charlotte—and, perhaps, at some future period, the mistress of Medlicote.—'Hail, Thane, that shall be!'—How do you like this prospect for your sister?"

She glanced with seemingly careless haste at Rosabel's varying countenance, but hastened on, exclaiming, "there's Ashbrook now, do you entertain him, while I cross over to Widow Green's. I forgot, Laton, the sassafras drink for her."

Captain Ashbrook rode leisurely at first, over the little rustic bridge which bestrode a narrow stream, fringed with osiers and willows; but, on seeing Rosabel standing alone, on the quiet pathway of the village, quickened his pace, and, dismounting from his horse, consigned it to his groom.

"Lady Lovaine will be here in a moment," said Rosabel, eagerly ; anxious to explain her seemingly lonely appearance in the village.

"My lady begs you will not wait for her ladyship, but will walk home with Captain Ashbrook," said Mrs. Laton, who now advanced towards them ; "she may be detained, and thinks that Miss Fortescue is tired."

"Very likely ; I am sure that I should be," said Captain Ashbrook, as Laton, having delivered her message, left them. "There is a very pretty turn down this way, to an old decoy, famous, in the days of Elizabeth, for wild ducks and water game of all sorts. Will you allow me to shew it to you ? I know my aunt's rambles too well, not to suppose that you must be fatigued if you attempt to follow the devious windings of her paths. You will think," he added, "that there is something whimsical in the family, when I conduct you down this lane, from which all prospect is precluded, and which seems, at present, to lead to nothing."

"Oh, but I like a genuine country walk," said Rosabel ; "I am tired of parks, and plantations, paddocks, avenues, and terraces."

"—Too much cultivation—too much formality

—and something like imprisonment, perhaps,” replied her companion ; “ you like those roads which seem open to the rest of the world ; where the homely pursuits of the humble and free are carried on.”

“ Yes ; that is what I like ; they give me a sensation of freedom, which one never feels hemmed round by palings and stuck fences.” Both Rosabel and her companion were silent for for some moments. The narrow lane seemed interminable ; its sides were closed in by the wild rose, now leafless and deprived of all its glories, save of the rich scarlet hews, which form its latest adornments : the nut-trees and the silver birch, interspersed in the hedge-rows, shed their leaves across the path-way, and through their slender branches occasional glimpses of the rich home scenes of an agricultural country might be seen. Suddenly, the road widened ; and the stream, which irrigated the meadows near the village, swelled into some importance, and ran across it. Above its shallow course rose a bridge of some architectural pretensions ; the arches were symmetrical and regular, and the rich old-fashioned structure was edged and

fortified with stone. On one side, behind a stately row of limes and alders, at this season fading in the utmost glory of Nature's colouring, the waters of the stream were banked up into a pond, long and dark, and its surface, now in its degeneracy, defaced with weeds, and disguised by little islets, upon which the willow-herb and teasle grew, intermixed with twigs of osier and the naked stems of reeds. The pool was encircled with trees, and in its dank waters, at a distance, some remains of its former purposes might be traced. On them the water-ben and coot still glided, and reared their young in the sedgy sides of the aquatic enclosure. On a bank, slightly elevated above the water's edge, stood a gloomy-looking tenement, ancient, with gable ends and ponderous chimneys, and appropriated, in former days, to the residence of those who had the important charge of the decoy. A complete seclusion reigned around the whole scene. The house fronted another way, and, in its dark and isolated situation, seemed fit for the purposes of decoying human victims, suitable for treasons, murders, or infiction of the basest revenge.

"How beautiful that weed!" Rosabel stooped, as she spoke, to pluck a spray of the myosotis, which grew in the shallow edges of the water, near which she stood. Captain Ashbrook, quicker than herself, was the first to disentangle a spray.

"Now, I am so very ignorant," said Rosabel, "though I have lived all my life in the country, I do not even know the name of this flower—do you?"

"It is the Forget-me-not," said Captain Ashbrook, with a momentary hesitation, as he placed the sprig in her hand.

"How foolish I am," thought Rosabel, "to blush; but it ought to have been given to Charlotte;" and, after walking a little while, she conscientiously, as she deemed it, let the flower fall; but not, it must be confessed, without a slight pang, which enhanced the virtue of the sacrifice.

They paused some time upon the bridge, then moving forwards, leaving the Elizabethian structure behind them, arrived on the brow of the hill, whence, by a gentle descent, they quickly, perhaps too quickly, reached the gates of Medlicote



Park. Something, scarcely to herself acknowledged, impeded the course of Rosabel's enjoyment in this excursion; yet with what fondness did she, in after life, recur to this walk, as to one of the most fleeting, yet greatest, enjoyments which the tenor of her early days afforded. Nevertheless, there was a contrariety in her feelings and wishes, for which she felt herself almost culpable. She had just heard that Captain Ashbrook was paying his addresses, or was thought to be paying his addresses, to her sister. Why could she not more cordially rejoice at the circumstance? Why was he less the idol of her girlish fancies to-day than he had been yesterday? His very attention to herself no longer afforded her the pleasure it had imparted before; and, dearly as she thought she loved her sister, had lost much of its zest since its motive was supposed to spring from a secondary source.

Captain Ashbrook, however, soon succeeded in restoring his absorbed companion to somewhat of her usual elasticity of spirits. The charm which women of taste and sensibility find in the society of well-bred and well-

educated men, and which they are taught to conceal, but of which they should rather be proud than ashamed, began, by degrees, to assert its influence over Rosabel's untutored, but not unstored, mind. Captain Ashbrook had those tastes, and that varied information which experience, as well as early culture, is necessary to impart. His mind was almost in its maturity—hers just expanding, but able to comprehend, and therefore, in some measure, to appreciate the powers of his. Captain Ashbrook had an eye for beauty, both intellectual, moral, and inanimate ; and, though a travelled man, he could discern, with a well-judging taste, the peculiar charms of the scene—not romantic, but yet fair—through which his footsteps now wandered. Medlicote, with its sunny dells, had been familiar to him from childhood. Every thorn which grew on its swelling meadows, every by-path through its thickets, were familiar to him. There was a sort of affectionate enthusiasm in his feelings for the old place, in which Rosabel, from her love for Hales Park, participated. Yet he looked upon it with the eye of an improver ; and in that Rosabel participated too.

"Were this place mine," he said, stopping and leaning, with Rosabel on his arm, over a gate, "I should take down that summer-house, and allow the rocky summit of that mount to be partly visible through the trees:—I should undo a great deal that has been done here—it is the usual error in park scenery to do too much. Look back, now: had not that belt of pines been planted, we could have caught a glimpse of the decoy; and what a fine object its gables would have supplied beyond those dark woods. I should turn that road round by the paddock, and I should—but you smile at my visionary improvements."

"Perhaps they are not altogether so visionary," said Rosabel, laughing. "I never knew till to-day, when Lady Lovaine told me, that you were the—the—"

"Heir to Medlicote, I suppose you mean," said Captain Ashbrook. "Well, so you are very much shocked at my anticipating my honours in imagination. But this has been so early and so much my home, that I feel like a son here; you know Ashbrook is no home to me. Here I have, at least, a sem-

blance of domestic life—a ray from that bright centre of enjoyments, from which, hitherto, my profession has debarred me.”

He laid an emphasis on the word hitherto ; and Rosabel thought to herself, “ what a prospect for Charlotte !” By degrees she gained more courage, and, the true spirit of woman-kind rising uppermost, she began to revolve in her own mind how she could introduce some topic which could lead to her sister—could elicit her appearance at the ball—women always consider appearance as half the battle won ; could raise a blush from Captain Ashbrook, or ensnare him into a sigh. Women are generally fertile in manœuvres ; but Rosabel was not at present an adept in wheeling round to the point which she desired to ascertain. At present, it was most easy to her to say exactly what she thought ; the world had not yet taught her the difficulty of being sincere. However, she endeavoured to make her first essay in conversational tactics, as, with Captain Ashbrook, she arrived very near to the front entrance of Medlicote. There was only a small portion of the lawn to be traversed, and, in despair, she began—

"The Miss Warners were at the ball the other evening, they told me."

"The Miss Warners!—have you seen them since the ball?" said Captain Ashbrook, surprised,

"Oh, yes; their brother met with an accident near Drayfield; they brought him back to the farm."

Captain Ashbrook was all astonishment and concern; he knew more of Mr. Henry Warner than any of the family; he was full of those minute, accurate enquiries which men make, not contented, as women usually are, with a flaming description of a mere catastrophe; but Rosabel was not particularly happy, on this occasion, to reply to all his queries. She was obliged, however, after all, to tell Captain Ashbrook about the bat-fowling, which she would gladly have passed over; and her description was such, that Captain Ashbrook guessed, though he did not say so, that she had been a witness to the sport. He looked very grave; and Rosabel was rather surprised that he seemed so much concerned, as the accident had not proved serious.

They reached the hall door; but, some how

or other, their steps moved involuntarily, as it were, round and round the carriage sweep, instead of ascending the hall steps.

"And the Miss Warners were saying," recommenced Rosabel, "that minuets are not quite so much in vogue; I am very glad—I remember what I suffered in learning the Minuet de la Cour;—and that Miss Churchill was the belle of the room."

"Minuets—oh, yes; they will be quite abandoned, I do hope—which Mrs. Waldegrave was regretting—I wish that had been the case some years ago, before we all had the trouble of learning them."

"So do I, indeed," said Rosabel; "but," she added, hesitatingly, "is Miss Churchill tall?"

"Did you never see her?" enquired Captain Ashbrook, in return: "she must have been often at Hales Hall, I should think."

"Yes; but you know, or more likely you do not know, though I think I mentioned it, that I am not yet introduced. I do not enter yet into the large dinner parties at home."

"Is your sister, then, so much older than you are?" asked Captain Ashbrook; "excuse me, I am asking an improper question; but I

thought there might have been some brothers between."

"Now, then, he is opening upon the real subject of his interests," thought Rosabel.

"No! Charlotte and I are very, very nearly of an age—that is to say, there are only eighteen months between us."

"And is that a cause of sorrow," said Captain Ashbrook, smiling; "for I think I heard, did I not, something like a sigh upon the occasion? At your age, young ladies are apt 'to chide slow-footed time,' until the period arrives when they are to be emancipated from domestic controul. Have you then learned to love your chains?"

"Now, then, he wants to find out what age Charlotte is," said Rosabel to herself, "and I will relieve his suspense; I will tell him at once.

"Charlotte was nineteen last May," she said, abruptly.

"That is a very dexterous way," returned Captain Ashbrook, "of letting me know how discreet an age *you* have attained; and, indeed, I quite agree with what is passing in your thoughts, which I interpret to be, that you were

entitled by your age to go to the ball, and that it is a great hardship that you did not go."

"Why will he turn every thing off in this manner?" thought Rosabel.

"I am sure," she said, trying to be generous, "that Charlotte would have been very glad if I could have gone with her; but it was not thought proper by my aunt. Did she dance much?"

"Who? Mrs. Waldegrave, or Miss Fortescue?"

"Oh, my sister, to be sure: my aunts, I should think, have not danced since the days of Queen Caroline."

"Your sister, I should think, must have danced all the evening; but I understood you had heard every particular from the Miss Warners—your interview with them was not, then, probably, of long duration?"

"This must be intentional, tiresome man," thought Rosabel, as, summoned by the half-hour bell, she turned into the house and ran up stairs to dress.



## CHAPTER XIV.

“ You are rather point device in your accoutrements.”

AS YOU LIKE IT.

LADY LOVAINE sacrificed so far at the shrine of vanity, or rather of custom — that more powerful bond—as to cast off, at dinner-time, her masculine attire, and to “dress;” a term formerly of far more extensive signification than in the present day.

She appeared, on the occasion now described, in a cardinal-blue lutestring, not indeed of the newest manufacture ; (for garments then, like friends, lasted a life-time) ; made something after the form of a pelisse, and, opening at each side, displayed underneath a petticoat of pea-green, festooned with bows ; over this was a sprigged muslin apron, trimmed at the pockets and round the edges with ribbon of that fashionable colour entitled Elliot’s fire, or Elliot’s

red-hot bullets, from the gallant defender of Gibraltar. Hair-powder, though not long after deprecated with such success by the young and fascinating Duchess of Devonshire as entirely to procure its disuse, was never abandoned by Lady Lovaine, who held as religiously to it, as to her politics and her domestic medicine. On the top of her head, fashioned to a cushion, were lappets of lace, more curious than clean, which supplied the place of a cap: but, being past the days of her youth, her ladyship wore a contrivance for the neck, the famous *Gorge-de-pigeon* handkerchief; above which, a band of narrow black velvet, confined by a knot of jewels, still served to set off a neck, the original grace and form of which were not, even at Lady Lovaine's age, entirely effaced by time. Thus arrayed, and adopting, with her company dress, a greater degree of courtesy and dignity of manner, Lady Lovaine might be said to grace the head of her table, and, like most of the old school, she never appeared to, so much advantage, as when exercising those duties of hospitality which are now almost entirely superseded by modern custom.

Lord Lovaine was, in the latter part of every day, a beau of the old school ; a sloven of the old school, in the morning. The habits of men, and of women too, are more equable now, than they were formerly. If men, Englishmen in particular, never now seem to be full dressed ;—if the cut of their coat be plebeian, their whole air commercial, if the dingy black of a well-worn cravat have superseded the fanciful grace of a neck ruffle, or the neatness of a plaited muslin stock ;—if all the insignia of rank, powder, embroidery, and swords, be exchanged for the close crop, the useful, warm, tight-fitting waistcoat ; the cane ; and if the long trouser, loose as well as long, be now invariably always adopted ; and the boundary between the knee and the leg be for ever lost, or seen only on court days ; if all the taste to be displayed in knee-bands and buckles evaporate, from want of an object to bestow itself upon ;—still a more constant attention prevails to neatness, cleanliness, and propriety in costume, than formerly pervaded even the most refined society.

Lord Lovaine, after revelling all the morning

in a dressing gown and velvet night-cap, appeared at the bottom of his own table, in a blotting-paper-coloured suit, a well-powdered peruke and tail; the collar of his coat well powdered too; a large cameo ring upon the little finger of one hand; an onyx on the other. Broken up as he was in constitution, and, it might be said, in mind—but he had no mind to break up—and, padded in every limb; made up, in short, of flannel and wash-leather; his lordship, or his lordship's clothes, still had an air of well-bred decorum, almost to the point of foppery. When he stood, were it but for a moment, even upon his crutch, it was in an attitude, one foot advanced before the other; the noble art of bowing, now fallen wholly into disuse, and the last specimen of which, genuine, was, I suppose, to be seen in Beau Nash, was still possessed by his lordship in some perfection. He had also that quality, greatly degenerated among us, of giving up his sole attention, or seeming to give up his sole attention, to those who honoured him, not whom he was supposed to honour in receiving, but who honoured him in being his guests.

Captain Ashbrook, who appeared to form the connecting link between one age and another, attired himself, according to his custom, with a scrupulous attention to existing fashions, yet not in the extreme. There was, however, the precision of the military man in the nicety of a costume, which seemed, unconsciously to its wearer, to have something of a regimental cut about it. Lady Lovaine, as her quick dark eyes glanced upon her nephew, fancied that his fine hair was curled and dressed with more than usual caution this day: his eye was brighter; his cheek had a livelier tinge than usual. She rather rejoiced at it: she disliked Mrs. Waldegrave, and Mrs. Waldegrave's manœuvres; if he must marry a Miss Fortescue, Lady Lovaine hoped it would not be Mrs. Waldegrave's Miss Fortescue—"next to an old maid, she abominated an old maid's pet." She was not herself disposed to undertake the new office of match-making: indeed much of her natural rhetoric was daily employed in railing at matrimony, as a contract in which the advantage was all on the side of men; and she had a particular objection to it among the poor, looking, as she did, merely

at the immediate inconveniences of the wedded state; however, if such an accident should occur, as Captain Ashbrook's falling into love with Rosabel Fortescue, there might be many alleviating circumstances, although she did think her nephew would have been as well without marrying at all.

Rosabel, fortunately for Lady Lovaine's schemes, was looking to-day as well as any match-maker, interested in her, could desire. In conformity with her father's wishes—for he thought her too young to adopt every prevalent fashion—her hair, though turned back—for in that the laws of costume were fixed as those of the Medes and Persians—was not, however, powdered, but hung, in all its native richness of colour, in curls, about her neck, and was decorated, on the present occasion, with a bunch of violet-coloured ribbons at the top, a streamer or two descending from the topknot, and mingling with the chesnut tresses, to which such ornaments could add no beauty. Her dress, according to custom, was long waisted, and pointed in the front, without being confined by a band, and much after the present mode. The great difference was in the sleeve, which was tight,

without a single plait, and, reaching to the elbow, was garnished with ruffles, not, like Lady Lovaine's, deep, and hanging over the arm like the modern *seduisans*, but narrow, and quilled, as it were, more modestly than ostentatiously, upon the sleeve. Her gown was of a white sprigged muslin, with an apron of the same, clear, full, and starched; her dress, made high upon the shoulder, so as to give the form as narrow and taper an appearance as possible, was finished upon the top with a broad violet-coloured ribbon, which, fastened on the bosom with a large bow, served as a tucker. Rosabel at present wore no ornaments, except a narrow band of black velvet, from which a cross, suspended by a single strip, fastened round her throat, shewed to advantage the white, yet not bloodless, skin, and the roundness of her graceful neck. Timid, not awkward — for her forwardness of manner had always been provoked by Mrs. Waldegrave's tyranny, and was confined to her own circle, — Rosabel now modestly endeavoured to aid, at least, by being a good listener, the enjoyments of those who thus kindly entertained her with what seemed to her, disinterested benevolence.

Dinner passed away quietly, but not without its attractions to all parties. To Lady Lovaine it had the unsophisticated gratification of being necessary ; for her morning's exertions made her fully able to enjoy it. Lord Lovaine loved it also for its own sake ; he liked also to have some one, to whom to send the bottle round. Lady Lovaine was no patroness of the bottle, and watched every glass of Madeira which he took, and her evenings were frequently occupied in descanting upon certain imprudences of diet or beverage, which her lynx-eyes had observed at dinner. His lordship took advantage of the general flow of conversation, if conversation any thing could be called in which he took a part, to deviate from a course of sweet-breads, boiled chickens, and blanchmanges, to which the tyranny of domestic medicine subjected him. On the present occasion he was quite valourous.

“ Captain Ashbrook, some wine with you. —No, Wilson ; I don't take my lemonade to-day. My lady, you see, who has taken her diploma—he, he, he—has a conceit for my having this decanter by me, filled with toast



and water, and lemon-peel juice : so that I can take a glass of wine without—he, he, he—bringing on the gout—of Lady Lovaine's wine, I mean. My lady, I'll take a little bit of that fricandeau—do ye see ?—some gravy to it, if you please."

"There's gout in that dish, my lord ; nothing so gouty as mushrooms. Ashbrook, I always admire the simplicity of your diet."

"Nobody ever dies of the gout," said Lord Lovaine, courageously : "it is quite a privilege to have it—cugh !" he added, almost unconsciously, as a twinge in his elbow reminded him that he possessed this privilege of the highly born. "Your father, Sir John, subject to the gout, Miss Rosabel ?"

"I think not," replied Rosabel.

"Mrs. Waldegrave, I am convinced, has a vast deal of suppressed gout about her," said Lady Lovaine. "She would be much the better for a regular attack—less irritable, and less irritating ; and so would all who have any thing to do with her."

There was a silence of some minutes, which was broken by Lord Lovaine's saying, with a

shadow of a bow, and an attempt at a smile to Rosabel, who, he thought, looked mortified by this attack upon her aunt—

“ I remember your mother, Lady Fortescue, a vastly fine woman, Miss Rosetta—Rosetta was her name, I believe—or Rosina.—No ? Bless me, I was thinking of the new afterpiece, and that sweet creature Miss—Miss—what—hey ? — Miss —— Aye ! Miss Phillips — my poor head !—aye, Miss Phillips :— it is Mrs. Robinson in *Perdita*, is it not ? ”

“ Take my lord’s plate away,” as if by accident, whispered Lady Lovaine to her butler.

“ It is my notion,” continued Lord Lovaine, quite astonished at his own powers of speech—“ excuse me, Miss Rosetta—but it is my notion that you have Sir John’s forehead—the Fortescue brow. Now, has any one ever told you that before ? Then I am right. Bless me have I done ? Have you done, Ashbrook ? ”

“ Ashbrook knows that your constitution like the affairs of the county, requires a scheme of retrenchment,” interposed Lady Lovaine.—“ I presume, Ashbrook, this leave of absence is not to last long, and you will be hurried away, like the rest of the world, soon ? ”

“ Lady Lovaine cannot endure seeing her

friends in a state of repose," thought Captain Ashbrook; and his manner was less bland than usual, as he replied—"I suppose so."

"And where will be your next destination?" enquired Rosabel—their eyes meeting as he answered his aunt's question.

"To America, I presume."

"To America! a most unhealthful climate," said Lady Lovaine: "the people there, besides being savages, which they are, have no notion of ventilation in their houses; they will have a temperature of twenty degrees outside, and one of a hundred within, their houses. Besides, they are nothing but a collection of rebels, thieves, vagabonds, and cut-throats."

"Miss Rosetta," interrupted Lord Lovaine, who, when once a new idea occurred to him, which was not an event of every day, rang changes upon it for a whole evening—"Miss Rosetta has her mother's dark hazel eye: at least, that is my notion. Is it yours, Lady Lovaine? There *is* a resemblance; I am confident of it."

"No one disputes it," said Lady Lovaine.—  
"Ashbrook, there will be just day-light enough, after you have handed me to the drawing-room, to show Miss Rosabel the pictures. My lord,

I have rung for Wilson to take charge of you. I suppose you are fond of pictures, Miss Rosabel ?”

“ I am indeed,” cried Rosabel, with a delight she could not conceal. She longed to explore the gallery with Captain Ashbrook ; and in a few minutes she found herself in a company of antiques : for the portraits, even of Lord and Lady Lovaine, could hardly be exempted from coming under that description. Their resemblances, painted some fifteen years before, had superseded those of their immediate predecessors, who hung, along with other worthies of the time of George the Second, to the right and to the left of the present occupants of Medlicote. The present Lord and Lady Lovaine afforded, in respect of dress, a kind of chronological continuation of the series. In the Peer, the curled wig and the full ruffle had yielded to the bag-wig, the tie, and stock ; a row of powdered curls, which had stood the full cannonade of an hour’s powder puffing, gave breadth and heighth to the brow of the present lord, whilst it could not impart expression ; and the imbecility of his small, light eye shone forth even upon canvass. He was in a

dress resembling a court suit, whilst a miniature portrait of Lady Lovaine was depicted to hang upon his breast, a sort of camera lucida representation of her own fierce self beside him.

Lady Lovaine was delineated in the period of her youth, but she had never been known to look under thirty. She was in a full costume, and it was a very full costume in the early days of George the Third ; the hair plaited, and festooned up behind, and festoons of satin, edged with pearl, hanging down from the cushion on her head, which was otherwise garnished with a plume of ostrich feathers of mixed colours. A bell hoop showed forth a petticoat too elaborate for description, and trigged out with bows of lace, festoons of beads, and other devices ; a large bunch of flowers stuck upon the left shoulder completed the furbelow. Her ladyship, too, wore, in conjugal reciprocity of feeling, the portrait of her lord, in large pearls ; not worn, indeed, "on high," but "set with modest splendour in her ample zone." Her bare hands and arms, for which she was famous, were surrounded with black velvet bands, a clasp upon each containing a small portrait. She was

emerging from a summer-house, mysteriously open in front, yet furnished with a red curtain—in the distance was her ladyship's favourite horse.

Captain Ashbrook did not attempt to arrest the attention of his fair companion long upon the portraits of his aunt and uncle, however valuable they might be to their owners; and he hurried over the whole series of family pictures with little boys in knee breeches, pink and white babies in the arms of their fond mammas, heirs apparent and co-heiresses, the seven ages of man and woman in every possible variety,—to show Rosabel some valuable originals of Vandyke or Rembrandt, or to point out such of his ancestors as had figured in war, or in any way adorned the annals of their country. His military taste was all apparent; and even Rosabel thought he expatiated too much and too long upon a plan of the fortifications of Hereford, which his ancestor, General Rudall, had held out in Cromwell's time. But there is nothing so soon caught by females as military ardour, contrary, as it is, to the tendencies of their sex.

“After all,” said Rosabel to Captain Ashbrook, “you are glad you have chosen the military profession, are you not?—I should be, I am sure, if I were you.”

“I was glad—I did enter into my first campaign with very great ardour; but, as a man advances in life, as he begins to estimate things by their intrinsic, not by their imputed, value—he longs to enjoy tranquil and domestic pleasures—to dwell among his own people—to plant the few laurel leaves which he may have gathered—at home.”

“It is evident what he is dwelling upon,” thought Rosabel, as they returned through an old deserted library and a billiard-room to the drawing-room: “why should I not hope that Charlotte may be the person?”

Lord and Lady Lovaine were both asleep, and neither of them were even partially aroused for some hours; and certainly not fully awake, before Rosabel, with the benefit of a full moon, attended within by Lady Lovaine’s maid and escorted without by Captain Ashbrook, on horseback, set off for Drayfield. It may be easily conceived, how innocently the intervening space was enjoyed by the two young people.

thus condemned to each other's society, in turning over books of prints ; after talking for half an hour over, but not concerning, a single engraving ; discussing books, balls, and battles, and—making themselves very comfortable indeed.



## CHAPTER XV.

"I can bear being told I am in the wrong, but tell it me gently. Perhaps I have been indiscreet."

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGUE.

ON the following day, Rosabel was greatly startled by the appearance of her father driving to the door in a phaeton, and looking unusually austere and awful. He descended quickly; and, entering the little sitting parlour, said, "I wish you, Rosabel, immediately to return home with me—prepare yourself directly to do so: Howard and his nurse will be sent for presently."

Rosabel obeyed in silence. Like the prisoner long habituated to one limited sphere, she had now begun to cherish her banishment; yet the natural love of events, to which the human mind is disposed, made her prepare for the change of place with alacrity, stimulated by curiosity. She was never too precise in her

attire, and was generally, with justice, accused of leaving every thing behind her. It was not, however, long before she found her way to the dairy to bid Mrs. Rivers a hasty adieu: the good lady was plunged to her elbows in curds and whey, and in an atmosphere so pure and cool, and with such a look of cleanly contentment, and with such a glow of cheerfulness on her broad bright face, that Rosabel, before saying farewell, paused for one moment to envy her. But there was little time for regrets, or even for the expression of gratitude; and Rosabel, well knowing that her father was not addicted to patience, any more than most of his sex, in regard to waiting, repaired quickly to him.

It was a glorious autumnal day, with a dash of frost in the air, sufficient to call forth the brightest bloom into the cheeks of beauty, and to tinge the purple cheeks of the plough-boy with a yet more vulgar red. Rosabel, as the phaeton drove slowly away from Drayfield, thought she had never seen the farm look so tempting: the team, hot from their morning's task, were just plunging their ponderous limbs, unfettered, into a dark but clear pool, which, fringed by willows, now bare, except here

and there a trembling yellow leaf, stretched along the side of the road. The long clear whistle of the plough-boy,—the faint sounds of the poultry yard,—the distant sheep bells on the height, and the prattling voice of Howard in the shrubbery, seemed to Rosabel like the sounds of departed peace, the requiem of passed contentment; such inconsistent beings are we, that the scenes which we have almost reviled, whilst constrained to abide in them, acquire a new, fictitious value in our eyes when the moment of separation arrives.

Sir John was perfectly silent as he drove his daughter through the lanes which led to Hales Hall; but he could not avoid noticing that Rosabel's head was turned incessantly backwards, in the direction of Medlicote, and, as the road wound another way, she leaned eagerly to catch the last glimpse of some distant object. He then began:—

“Rosabel, when I consented—though it was against my own judgment—at the persuasion of your aunts, and in compliance, I was told, with your own wish, to allow you to go to Drayfield, I thought I could rely upon your prudence, and your promise to me not to demean yourself by

childish and indiscreet conduct.—I am sorry to learn that I have been mistaken.”

“How, Sir?” enquired, Rosabel, almost choaked with vexation at an attack so unexpected and unmerited; “what have I done?”

“Admitted, as I am informed, the visits of Captain Ashbrook, Mr. and the Miss Warners, and others; and, without permission, gone to Medlicote, a circumstance for which I do not altogether blame you, because I consider that Lady Lovaine is, in some measure, responsible for having tempted you there, unknown to your aunts and myself;—and, when there, you were seen, I understand, rambling about, in certain directions, with Captain Ashbrook. I am really concerned and surprised that Captain Ashbrook, a man whom I respect as a neighbour and as a gentleman, should induce you to do what he knows, in any case, would be unpleasant to me, and what seems to be annoying to your aunts, peculiarly, and, under present circumstances, to your sister.”

Rosabel knew not how it was, that the words “under the present circumstances” gave her more vexation than all the parental reproof

previously conveyed in her father's admonitory speech. She felt angry with herself beyond measure, for her deficiency in generous feeling; nevertheless, for some moments, she could only say to herself—

“It is so, then—it is a settled affair—Charlotte's happiness is certain—I am very glad—I ought to be—so—my aunts will, indeed, rejoice!”

Sir John perceived her abstraction, and was hastening to interpret it into an evidence of her conscious impropriety, when Rosabel, rousing herself, hastened to vindicate her conduct. Although she was afraid of her father, she had the greatest possible reliance upon his justice, and, even now, upon his affection: on whom else, indeed, had she to rely? If he did not love her, whom had she to care for her? There is an instinctive feeling in the minds of children, which leads them to believe that their parents must love them until parental misconduct, or evil councils, destroy this happy dependance. Rosabel loved better that her father should even look sternly upon her than that he should regard her proceedings with indifference; for if once such a calamity

as that were to happen to her, she should feel herself, indeed, a castaway. With a candour and simplicity to which Sir John was little accustomed in his elder daughter, whose character was of a close and cautious nature, Rosabel told her father every thing which had occurred to her during her residence at Drayfield; she explained even her own feelings to him, and accounted for her readiness to run into any society that offered, by the unfounded, perhaps, but natural impression, that she was not kindly, though perhaps justly, appreciated at home—that she was sent to be out of the way, during a season of enjoyment—and that no one cared for her, “except you, sir, and, perhaps, poor little Howard,” she added, as she finished.

Sir John, though the tear trembled in his eye, looked neither to the right nor to the left, as he replied to Rosabel’s defence. He was not a man to shew that he was melted by this appeal. He saw, indeed, in the expressions of his child, a manifest improvement in sentiment and principle; and he rightly judged, that a species of adversity which the acknowledged partiality of her aunts to her sister presented to her, was working its beneficial effects upon her character;

rendering her humble and grateful, and teaching her to rely upon herself for the creation of her own happiness: but the ordeal was severe, and Sir John, as a parent, could not but feel indignant at those by whom it was imposed. He restrained himself, however, but with the mere expression, that he was satisfied with Rosabel's explanation; and the assurance, grave and measured, as was every thing he did, that the preservation of his affection, as well as the degree of esteem which she should receive from others, lay within the compass of her own power.

The result of her explanations to her father was, however, a determination on his part to permit her, henceforth, to enter into the society which the vicinity of Hales Hall afforded. This boon was no great grant, nor extended to a considerable range, the neighbourhood being by no means populous, nor what is usually termed gay. Like all other districts, it comprised, as it usually does, the envied and the envious: as in all country societies, usage had constituted a barrier — not at that period broken through by improved liberality on one hand, and intelligence and increased refinement on the other—between families of the first class,

and those of the second; a remnant of the feudal system which elevated the Allodial Lords into little monarchs, and caused the inhabitants of county towns to be regarded as beings of an inferior order; a crew of Pariahs, which no English Bramin ought to violate his caste by admitting in his fellowship.

The Warners, as it has been already stated, were not as yet ranked among the select families, who constituted what was entitled county society. Hitherto, however, the distance of Mr. Warner's residence from Hales Hall had prevented those inconveniences which an unequal acquaintance is often found to produce. Even Mrs. Waldegrave could be condescendingly civil to the Miss Warners when they had to ride twelve miles over to Hales Hall, to call upon Rosabel Fortescue; for Charlotte, with a prudence worthy of enconium, had never yet acknowledged the Miss Warners as her acquaintance. They came to see Rosabel; they were Rosabel's friends, and it was of no use her beginning an acquaintance with them—they could not expect Miss Fortescue to notice them; and it “was not desirable to sanction as Miss Fortescue's acquaintance those whom, in case of



into her head to say she would call; and then, if she sanctions it, we must go, whether we will or not; and I should like to hear what the Prunnells intend to do, before I quite decide."

"The Warners dined there the other day," said Alice.

"Did they! and who did they meet?" cried Mrs. Waldegrave, eagerly, as if the whole result of the consultation depended upon that one circumstance.

"That I forgot to ask," replied Alice.

"Forgot to ask! the very thing you should most have seen to—you may always judge of what people think of you by the persons they ask to meet you; being asked to dinner is nothing — and who to ask to meet the Warners, in case Sir John should ever have them to dinner, is the difficulty. Mrs. Warner, if she had been alive, was a passable sort of woman, to be sure, and of a tolerable family; but of another county: but then that is not known hereabouts: nobody asks who Mrs. Warner was, but what Mr. Warner was and *is*?"

"And *is*, indeed!" said Charlotte, with her cold, short blighting laugh — the laugh with

which she had often provoked Rosabel to the last pitch of irritation, in their sisterly disputes.

“Well, I am sure I don’t know what to do!” said Mrs. Waldegrave, as she quitted the room.

“Aunt Waldegrave is quite put out,” said Charlotte, calmly, without raising her head from her work.

Circumstances, however, arranged that knotty point which Mrs. Waldegrave had found too difficult to settle. Sir John himself—unaided by the counsels of the female part of the family, to whose advice he had, indeed, seldom recourse—had ridden over, three miles, to Mr. Warner’s new residence in person; and before Mrs. Waldegrave was at all sufficiently prepared for such a catastrophe, the call was returned. Mr. Warner had bustled through the suite of rooms with his eldest daughter on his arm: Amy and her brother had followed; luncheon had been ordered and even eaten, and the parties had taken leave and entered their carriage before Mrs. Waldegrave had wholly recovered from the shock, or could dive into the motives which had actuated her brother in this strange piece of condescension.

Like most ladies whose minds were but little exercised, Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice were prone to attribute motives of some peculiar character to every action, the intention of which they could not immediately develop ; and, in the course of sundry discussions, they arrived at the conclusion that Sir John was secretly countenancing some matrimonial scheme between Rosabel, and some member of the Warner family. In former days, before it was thought necessary to trouble woman-kind with much tuition, when the spelling-book was looked upon as chiefly useful, because it was the key to some book upon cookery, or to some circulating library—in those blessed days, dress was the study, love the occupation, and matrimony the object of single women. Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice, having all their lives been scheming for themselves in this matter, were now fully adequate to scheme for others. They wisely resolved to leave Sir John to himself.

“ My brother has a large family,” said Mrs. Waldegrave ; “ it is very natural that he should wish to part with some of them : it seldom happens that all the branches from the family stock can be unexceptionable. However, I have no

notion of Rosabel's marrying before Charlotte. In the first place, Captain Ashbrook must be brought to the point; he has been trifling with both the sisters, and he will, no doubt, make his election in choosing Miss Fortescue."

"Charlotte," replied Alice, "is by far the most of a lady of the two."

"Decidedly, sister; decidedly. Charlotte knows what is due to herself—Rosabel does not. My brother is right—young Mr. Warner will do well enough for Rosa; and, in London, there is no need, you know, of their being introduced to my connections—poor dear Mr. Waldegrave's connections;—nor here, to the Montagues, the Smiths, the Dickons's, or the Knowles's."

"It will be as well, sister, then," said Alice, "to allow Rosa to dine with the Warners on Tuesday; and we can join the ball in the evening, with Miss Fortescue. You know my brother has the road-meeting to attend to, and cannot dine at the Hall, nor Captain Ashbrook either."

"Rosabel will be too much set up, Alice," replied Mrs. Waldegrave, doubtfully; "the child is even now half beside herself. Really, a

brother's family is quite a charge ; no circumstances (however it was thought right, and one must do what one believes to be right), or, as I was going to say, no circumstances, sister, would induce me to take charge of other people's children, as poor dear Mr. Waldegrave used to say—" But her colloquy was interrupted, and poor dear Mr. Waldegrave's observation was lost to posterity.

It was Captain Ashbrook who broke in upon the sisterly tete-a-tete. This was his second call in the course of the same week ; and the two affectionate aunts could only ascribe one motive for such perseverance. Had they known all--had they been aware that Captain Ashbrook sauntered about the park—which, as a neighbour, he was privileged to enter—often met Rosabel in a certain direction, by a path which skirted a wood, and led to a gentle rise, whence she could just catch a glimpse of the gable end of Ashbrook House—little Howard, her sole companion—out of bounds altogether—no witness of her conduct—had she known this, she would have indeed thought a brother's family a charge. These brief meetings, of course, were wholly accidental.-- It is so very awkward that

estates will join. And there had been an old usage, better honoured in the breach than the observance, of the Ashbrooks being at liberty to sport over the Fortescue grounds, and the Fortescues over Ashbrook manor. A gun is sometimes as good a pretext for a flirtation as a fan. Captain Ashbrook was always so afraid of alarming Miss Rosabel, that he looked around him many times before he took aim : but his dogs were sure to find her out, when in the most secluded parts of the park, which she had once considered as so lonely. Captain Ashbrook's four-footed companions were certain, several times a week, to come bouncing behind her, followed by himself, all anxiety to see what game they had started ; but without a single bird in his possession.

Then, on the other hand, Howard was so fond of the park ; he never would remain quietly in the pleasure-grounds ; every one was tired of him, except Rosabel, and she was obliged to give way to him for peace. Such was her explanation to Captain Ashbrook, in which he perfectly coincided ; and said it was natural for a boy to love guns and dogs ; and, indeed, Howard's taste for these manly posses-

sions became every day more decided. All day the nursery rang with the names of 'Ponto and Presto;' while the poor old aunts were the only persons unenlightened. The very servants began to find out—although it were treason to say so—that Miss Rosa, and not Miss Charlotte, was the cause of Captain Ashbrook's frequent visits, and his liking the Fortescue pheasants better than the Ashbrook pheasants. Even Rosabel herself had long since decided, in her own mind, from sundry feminine observations, that Charlotte was not the object of Captain Ashbrook's visits. Had she seen that her sister's feelings were interested, she had regretted this; but Rosabel well knew that Charlotte's heart was wholly safe.

By degrees, by these and other opportunities of meeting, Rosabel began to feel that all her burden of youthful care was lightened: no matter that aunts were peevish, and her sister cold—she had one new, firm, fond tie to life—with which they intermeddled not. Every vexation, each passing care, was alleviated; and she had the happiness of being able to revere, as well as to love, the object of her early attachment. Captain Ashbrook was universally idolized; his

demeanour was so frank and honourable, his acquirements so considerable, his manners so refined, that, with Rosabel's love for his society, there was mingled a deep enthusiasm for his character—such an enthusiasm as influences, in a great measure, the future intellectual features of a young female: for Rosabel now read every thing with his sentiments—saw every thing with his views; she strove to dive into his opinions, to conform to his ideas on all subjects: she now sought to interest herself with the studies from which she had hitherto revolted; she quickly found that she could not fully enjoy Captain Ashbrook's conversation, nor be an adequate companion to him, without some portion of that cultivation of mind which he possessed. She dwelt on every word which he uttered, and what was said, however trivial, however careless, furnished her with reflection for many an hour of ruminating solitude.

Certainly, the country is the place for cherishing all morbid affections of the mind, be they love, or grief, or hatred. The long, quiet morning, the still more unbroken evening, allow such emotions to assert, and to continue,



their full sway over the mind. When once excited, such passions find fuel every where ; and even the atmosphere of London, with its fogs and its crowds, cannot extinguish them. But to return to my narrative.

## CHAPTER XVI.

“ The haughty and opinionated will meet with the very contrary of what they expect, if, by such a carriage, they look for esteem.”—*LA BRUYERE*.

**NOTHING** in life is so comfortable as the certainty of one's own moral and intellectual superiority ; and one of its most agreeable effects is the confidence which it gives to condemn, in every detail, the practices of one's particular friends and nearest neighbours. Mr. and Miss Warner were peculiarly blessed in this respect ; and had the daily happiness of finding every thing wrong which their nearest neighbours, the Fortescues, considered right. Whilst the two families expressed the greatest good will and politeness for each other, and were, as Mr. Warner gave it out every where, on the best of terms, a gnome or sprite, hovering over the dinner or tea table of each mansion, might have heard colloquies of this description :

“What vulgarity those Warners sport,” was Miss Fortescue’s observation. “Of course. I was obliged to admire Miss Warner’s new bonnets ; but I never saw any thing so odious !—just like them—antiquated, dowdy, Chevertonish.”

“And those shawls which they wore,” said Hubert, Sir John’s second son, on whom his father’s hopes chiefly rested, and who had now lately returned home from a public school ; “were they not something like horse-cloths ?—a relic of—”

“Mr. Warner’s stock in trade,” interposed Mrs. Waldegrave, with a faint, short, feline sort of laugh. I do believe nothing shews character more than a laugh ; a chapter might be written on the subject, as a supplement to Sterne’s Chapter upon Noses.

“I cannot think,” said Miss Alice, “whom they will contrive to muster at their party on Friday : surely Mr. Warner would be much better not to be giving parties—no married female to conduct them, and—”

“Oh, no, no, aunt,” said Hubert ; “for Heaven’s sake, let him do that ; ’tis the only thing worth knowing them for. I declare I would

not run the risk of having to bow to one of them in London, were it not for the chance of a good dinner there now and then."

"I hope," said Charlotte, as she fastened her netting-silk, "that Mr. Warner won't talk of 'in generally' at the head of his table."

"And that Miss Amy will not speak of riding out in a carriage," added Mrs. Waldegrave, "instead of driving out."

"I presume Rosabel will be in the third heaven," pursued Charlotte, calmly, "with her dear Miss Warners."

"Or in the third *Even*, as Squire Warner hath it," interrupted Hubert.

"No; now I don't believe he is quite so bad as that," said Aunt Alice, apologetically.

Such was the tone of the Fortescues; whilst Miss Warner, at her father's tea-table, held forth, touching her neighbours, thus:—

"I wonder Miss Fortescue chuses to go to church such a figure—absolutely in such a dress as my maid would not wear; and poor Rosabel trigg'd out in her mother's old things. I like Rosabel; but she is dreadfully untidy, and really does not care what she looks like."

"She is such a fine girl, it does not much signify what she has on," said Henry Warner, looking upon a newspaper, but his face suffusing as he spoke.

"I think," observed Mr. Warner, with magisterial dignity, "that Sir John would do well not to allow that third son of his to be hanging and lounging about home—doing no good over at Cheverton, where he rides every day, as my clerk tells me, who meets him."

"He very often goes on commissions for his sisters," said gentle Amy, drinking her tea very fast, and very hot.

"It is quite melancholy," resumed Miss Warner, "that Sir John should allow his family to be so over-ruled, as they are, by those two very illiterate and narrow-minded women, his sisters; positively, the younger ones have had no education at all; and, as for Miss Fortescue, we all know the depth of her capacity; then, poor dear Rosabel—might have been a very fine character, if—"

"She is a fine character as it is," said Henry, folding up the newspaper.

"Sir John—though he is Sir John—a man

of family, and all that—I take to be a weak man, though he is very civil and friendly as a neighbour,” observed Mr. Warner.

“ He’s quite the gentleman ; don’t you think so ?—and a very handsome man,” cried Amy ; “ how much Rosabel and Mr. Hubert are like him : but, I am told,” she added, qualifyingly, “ that his partiality to his eldest son is as great as to his eldest daughter.”

“ Shameful !” exclaimed Henry.

“ Abominable !” said Phillis.

“ The effect of the law of entail,” said Mr. Warner. “ Birthright, in these old families, is all in all. Sir Phillip, that will be—an idle spendthrift—will come into a handsome estate, and the younger branches be left, probably—”

“ Without a shilling !” said Phillis.

“ But that consideration ought to make a father kindest to his younger children during his life-time,” observed Henry.

“ Law, my dear Henry, is all-in-all ; and, I may say, it is second nature—to me it is—although I never had the advantage of a legal education ; and I must say, that I quite approve

of making a family, although the principle is one of feudal times."

"I suppose it is a relic of feudal times," said Phillis, "that all the congregation in Hales church are to wait, standing in their pews, until Miss Fortescue or her father chuse to move out, after service.—Is that to your taste, sir, in a house of prayer?"

"My dear Phillis," said her father, "we are not to expect every body to see with our eyes, or to judge in the way you and I would judge of things. Our notions, I believe, are not of the common sort; but there was Mr. Henry, here, defending this very custom, in a company of his friends, the other day."

"Not exactly defending it, sir; I was only saying that it allowed me more time for my meditations, more leisure to admire the noblest works of Nature—two very lovely girls."

"Two!"—exclaimed Phillis, indignantly—"why, you do not admire Miss Fortescue, surely?"

"Her eyelashes are too light," said Amy.

"I am sure her figure is very good," argued Henry.

“ Too thin and stiff,” said Phillis ; “ her clothes look as if they were plaistered on her.”

“ And never, never,” continued Amy, “ does one see the slightest variation on Miss Fortescue’s countenance—not even a blush—”

“ Which cannot be said of Rosabel,” added Phillis ; “ though I am very partial to her, I could wish her to blush less—the defect of her complexion is its being a little too high.”

“ Not a shade — not the quantum of a shade of a rose-leaf too high,” cried Henry : “ though vivid, it is delicate, varying, even fleeting. You may criticize Miss Fortescue, Phillis ; but do leave her sister alone.”

“ I think it is high time to stop proceedings,” said Mr. Warner. “ Do not set your young heart upon a Fortescue, Henry ; there are plenty of county matches better than that ; and when you see your sister so respected and noticed—courted by all the neighbouring families—”

“ I do not aspire to any one,” said Henry Warner, in a tone between sullenness and dejection ; “ allow me, sir, to admire.”

“ Oh, certainly, sir, certainly young gentleman. You show good breeding in admiring



one of a certain quality ; you don't degrade yourself by falling in love, even hopelessly, in that quarter. Why it should be hopelessly, I do not know : Miss Rosabel might do worse. But, to tell you the truth, Sir John, though my friend, has a large, needy family, badly brought up, and—”

“ I—I,” said Phillis, “ though I have the greatest affection for Rosabel, would rather see Henry die an old bachelor than have her for a wife—out of such a family—brought up with such ideas. But, look ! just see—talk of people, and you know the old proverb—there they are !—Rosa and her brother, riding over to see us—coming now up the hill—Miss Fortescue and Mrs. Waldegrave behind. Amy, run out to meet them, and say that I am at home, and how delighted I shall be to see them.”

It was in this state of affairs, when the intimacy between the Fortescues and the Warners was supposed to be at its height, that Mr. and Miss Warner had decided to give a dinner party. All the Hales Hall party were invited, and secured *imprimis* : and then came the anxieties of getting suitable people to meet them.

Conscious of being a little looked down upon by their neighbours, the Miss Warners were extremely anxious that their worthy father should not sully the gentility of their table by the admixture of any of his old family friends upon the occasion: the lawyer from Cheverton, for instance; or that anomalous compound animal, half banker, half linen-draper, whom you shook hands with at a side door in the capacity of a gentleman, and bought a yard of tape from, at the front entrance, his shop. All this fastidiousness was as metaphysics to the worthy magistrate, whose notion of a dinner party was a good feast, and a table crammed with as many guests as it would hold. The refinements of modern exclusiveness had not as yet disturbed the good, comfortable, vulgar enjoyment with which a good dinner inspired him.

His daughters, however, knew better, and were aware, that their rise in society would be for ever blasted, were they to mix, with irreverent hand, the exalted Mrs. Waldegrave and her clan with their cronies the Miss Olivers, the belles of Cheverton, and even with some of the card-playing, half-county, half-town ladies of that borough, who sprang from a country stock,

but had degenerated into town residents. No—it was those standing dishes the Goodyers, Churchills, Smiths, Dickons's, and Percivals, established county people, who were in the habit of meeting each other in a round of state dinners, from January until December, who must be invited to meet the Fortescues.

How unlucky!—the Goodyers were engaged; had been so for half a year, to celebrate a marriage anniversary, fifteen miles off: the Churchills were going to Bath: the Smiths and Dickons's had all bad colds. The Percivals alone accepted the invitation. What was to be done? the table must be filled up; and then there was a long discussion about who would, and who would not, do to meet the Fortescues. In this matter, Phillis, who pretended to despise such weaknesses, was by far the most hyper-critical: Amy was anxious to have some young men. Henry some young ladies; and Mr. Warner took the opportunity of thrusting in a few of his own especial favourites—friends of thirty-years' standing; the very antiquity of whose acquaintance with him at once proclaimed the origin of his family. Some persons there were, it was true, of almost suitable condition, who

might have been invited ; but then, would it do to ask them a week after the rest ? as they might or might not hear that the Fortescues had been asked a week ago, and that the Goodyers, Churchills, Smiths, Dickons's, &c. had refused ?

At last, however, the table was filled : Henry had a parson friend or two from College. It was decided to have some of the half-pay officers from Cheverton—hungry men, always disengaged—who looked and behaved like gentlemen, to the extent of one bottle each ; and there were some odd-and-end people, and a stray single lady or two, staying on visits hereabouts, that would look creditable. Miss Atkins, for instance, who was only on a visit at Cheverton, had been staying lately in town, knew Mr. Sheridan, and had dined with Mrs. Piozzi, and had rather a literary turn herself—not that the Fortescues affected literature, but they must know that it gave persons a certain rank in society.

Every arrangement was, therefore, at last completed ; when, lo ! one gloomy morning there came notes from the Fortescues : Miss Fortescue was so sorry, some particular friends of

her father were coming, the very day of Mr. Warner's party, to the Hall, and it was not thought right that Miss Fortescue should be out, &c. Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice must decline for the same cause. Their regrets were chastened by a dash of Fortescue dignity, as much as to say, "the honour would have been too great for you ; we withhold it, and you have no right to complain." Sir John, through Rosabel, begged his best compliments to Mr. Warner, and the arrival of his friends would not have prevented him — for he meant to have the honour of introducing, and now hoped to be allowed to substitute his very old and valued friend, Mr. Lermont, formerly in His Majesty's civil service, in a high official department, in his place—but Sir John was grieved to find, that the Meeting of the Trustees of the Roads, at Newport, had been fixed for that day, and as Chairman he must attend, &c.

Before this blow was recovered, there came a note from Captain Ashbrook, full of unfeigned concern, that the necessity of meeting his Colonel, twenty miles off, on that very day, upon regimental business, quite indispensable, would prevent his waiting upon Mr. Warner at dinner ;

but that, as he understood from the young ladies, there was to be a little dance in the evening, he should ride back, as fast as possible, in hopes of being in time for it, &c. &c.

To put off the party were impossible, however much to be desired; for messengers must be sent ten miles in that direction, and six miles in that, and the two half-pay officers were never to be caught or overtaken; they were always at some ball, or some town or another, and it would be endless collecting and inviting the same party again. "And after all," said Phillis, "now the compliment is paid, I am quite as well pleased Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice don't come. We shall be more at our ease."

"And Rosabel comes," said Amy, "and Mr. Hubert."

—"So that we shall have quite the best part of the family," added Henry.

"As to the pleasure of the thing," said Phillis, "I think little of these great acquaintance; and I consider the Olivers quite as well in their way as the Fortescues."

Henry and Amy were silent.

Mr. Lermont, who furnished the heads of the Fortescue family, at this time, with their ex-

cuse, had, mean time, arrived at the Hall. He had been very early in life known to Sir John, who had received from him some kindness, which Sir John's generous nature could never forget, and which was now remembered when the power to benefit had passed away from his old friend. Mr. Lermont was twenty years Sir John's senior, and had, for years, filled some official situation, in which he had enjoyed considerable patronage, but from which he had retired in embarrassed circumstances. He was one of those benevolent persons whose life is passed in performing some good action, but who have the unlucky knack of doing more harm than good. 'Though his ability to assist the humble, by his interest with the great, had now much declined, he still lived in the delusive idea, that his influence was considerable, his good word effectual. Some old, and steady, and high-born friends there were, who, by their undiminished respect, and desire to please him, contributed to flatter his virtuous weaknesses, and to make him still believe himself all-powerful : and, among these, one of the kindest, and most respectful, was Sir John Fortescue.

The news of Mr. Lermont's intended arrival,

was succeeded, in the course of the same day, at Hales Hall, by the intelligence, that the Goodyers, the Churchills, the Smiths, and Dickons's, those telegraphs of Mrs. Waldegrave's movements, had all declined Mr. Warner's invitation.

"Then I am sure, if Miss Churchill cannot dine there, Miss Fortescue cannot," said Charlotte; "don't you think so, aunt?"

"My dear, I would not, on any account, do a thing which the Goodyers and these other people think beneath them. One must always do what one believes to be right; and I cannot believe it to be right to go. Rosabel, you can go, my love; and Hubert: I do not consider it quite the thing for Miss Fortescue to visit at the Hill, until we see what other people do."

"Certainly not," echoed Aunt Alice.

And the excuses were speedily sent, expedited by the further intelligence that Captain Ashbrook was to be at a distant part of the county on that day; which was, indeed, a powerful additional reason, and fatal to the brilliancy of Miss Warner's dinner party.

At length, the inauspicious day arrived; and, like many inauspicious days, turned out better



and the vain heart of Rosabel could desire. They were much alike, and Rosabel might have played Viola to his Sebastian ; and Hubert was, as yet, untainted by the world's more serious corruptions ; his light heart knew nothing but her vanities ; his ambition was at present honourable, his hopes of future distinction in the military profession high ; his feelings were generous and affectionate, although ungoverned. What an object of present pride for a parent to look upon ! How grievous were the fall of so promising a nature ! the blight of such hopes ! the ruin of one now so happy and so guiltless !

Happy, however, for the present, Rosabel and her brother, and their elderly friend, were ushered into Mr. Warner's drawing-room. The party, notwithstanding all disappointments, was by no means a small one ; for Mr. Warner, regretting that a good dinner should not be eaten, had filled in all vacancies, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Phillis. The room was awed into a temporary silence as the Fortescue party entered—a silence broken only by Mr. Warner's enquiries :—"How is my worthy friend SIR John ? SIR John gone to the road meeting ? Unfortunate ! Most happy, sir, to

have the honour of seeing you—most happy, sir, indeed. Phillis, my dear, Mr. Lermont, a valued friend of Sir John's. This is my daughter, sir; and this young lady, ditto; this other one, ditto; and ditto to two others in the nursery. So you see, Mr. Lermont, we boast as many olive branches as your friend *Sir John*.

“—We have not quite the party we should have wished to meet you,” in a low tone. “The worthy gentleman to your right is a son of Mars. Stirring times these, Mr. Lermont: another war soon. Our friend Captain Ashbrook expects to be ordered off soon; again to the New World, I fancy.

“Miss Rosabel, you are quite blooming to-day—quite a miniature likeness of Sir John, Mr. Lermont?”—

“And, like most miniatures, a little flattering,” replied Mr. Lermont, with a remnant of old gallantry.

“—Of Sir John in his best days.—Phillis, are we ever to have dinner? 'Tis as bad as attending on a grand jury, I declare. Talking of juries, Mr. Lermont, allow me to introduce to you my son, Mr. Henry Warner, student of

the Inner Temple, and speedily, *Deo volente*, to be called to the Bar—not as a prisoner—he, he!—but as a pleader: a profession which I very much regret, Mr. Lermont, not having pursued; it being my own wish, but, unluckily, contrary to the desire of my progenitor and progenitrix.”

“Your father was not himself in the profession, I presume, sir?” enquired Mr. Lermont.

“Why—no. — Amy, my dear, see what those people are about. Never can get dinner up, nowadays, Mr. Lermont, as we used to do, when our good mothers went down to see the first dish carried in themselves.”

Mr. Lermont bowed in silent acquiescence. He gave up his own accuracy upon the subject; but he had not remembered that it was a custom.

“And now, Henry, you hand down Miss Percival. Mrs. Percival, allow me. Mr. Lermont, excuse my giving you one of my daughters: ladies are a scarce commodity to-day—am sorry I can do no better for you. Gentlemen, you must pair off as well as you can. Captain Phillimore, Miss Rosabel Fortescue—

who is very partial to the profession, I believe," said Mr. Warner, very pointedly, looking at her, after the procession, with funereal solemnity, had marched down stairs, and seated themselves.

"Phillis was right," thought Henry Warner; "her colour is certainly too high on some occasions."

"Your brother, Mr. Hubert there, knows to what I refer—a bit of a favourite, is he not?"

Rosabel, quite relieved, smiled assent; and, as she leaned forward, a row of sun-burnt, fox-hunting looking faces leant forward to look at her.

If good manners consist in setting people at their ease, Mr. Warner certainly excelled in that respect. In a few minutes, the clatter of spoons and forks was exceeded by the universal buz of conversation which ran round the table. Rosabel, who had outlived her days of childish effrontery, and was emerging into the middle period of bashfulness, sat back, and looked around upon the company. It seemed to her that they were different to those whom she had been in the habit of seeing occasionally, though she could not define in what the differ-

ence consisted. They were equally well dressed, and fully as much at their ease ; but it was an ease which repelled female timidity, and made her long to retire into a corner : it was an ease connected with a perfectly good understanding with oneself : and yet there must have been a consciousness of something wanting, as the more aspiring of the party took every opportunity of raising themselves in general estimation, by some indirect boast. Rosabel thought she had seldom heard so many great names brought forward for such slight occasions.

Whilst Rosabel thus made her comments, Hubert was happy in paying his devoirs to the fair daughter of his host, Amy, who seemed perfectly insensible to the presence of many other of her usual train, and left even both the military men to Phillis, who was in general thought too clever, by Amy's beaux, for their taste. Mr. Lermont was eating and praising every thing, all benevolence and all warmth ; only he could not give up his political prepossessions to the democratic portion of the party ; for at that time the spirit of democracy prevailed, in a very uncommon degree, among the middling

ranks of society ; and in this he was borne out, to his heart's content, by the military gentlemen.

Mr. Warner had, or created to himself, an arduous duty at the bottom of the table ; for he was what is vulgarly termed a fidget, and his official functions had given him a taste for interfering in every thing. He suspended the labours of the carving knife from time to time, to discipline his troops, as he called them—a body guard consisting of his men servants, creatures who looked as if they had jumped out of smock-frocks, or fustian jackets, into their liveries. The modern improvements in the management of the table had not then rendered obsolete, neither had they entirely banished, even in good society, the necessity of some directions from the top and bottom of the table ; and, as Mr. Warner observed, aside, to his confidential clerk, whom he had squeezed in on his left, “ since he had been a widower, every thing had been left to him :” and, indeed, the duties of hospitality, in his opinion, rendered a little bustle essential.

“ Come, John, look sharp ; clear away fast. Where is James ? What are you all about ?

—'The tarts there, Peter ; make all uniform—  
balance the dishes.—What ! no hot plates ?  
—all frozen ? — How's this ? all's not right  
below, Miss Warner.'

## CHAPTER XVII.

“ Oh, how this spring of love resembleth  
 The uncertain glory of an April day ;  
 Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,  
 And bye-and-bye a cloud takes all away !”

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

ROSABEL retired from the dinner table, fatigued, rather than excited, and beginning to agree with her aunts that she was as yet too young for parties. The drawing-rooms were, however, cleared for a dance, and the sounds of Miss Warner's harpsichord, accompanied by the wailing notes of the fiddle, reminded Rosabel forcibly of the evening when she had first heard the sounds of merriment under Mr. Warner's roof, and had first met Captain Ashbrook. She felt grateful to him, grateful to the Warners, that they had received her into their friendship, after that act of early imprudence, to which, indeed, her young friends never alluded ; and, whilst they were not, perhaps, companions altogether to her taste, they



had, as she thought, a claim upon her friendship which could never be dispensed with.

It was indeed, as Mr. Warner said, a house-warming. Fires blazed in every room, candles burned.—tea, coffee, and hot negus, sent up their fragrant steam. A lively tune struck up, and Rosabel found herself quickly engaged to open the ball with Mr. Henry Warner; whilst Amy and Hubert, too happy, stood next to them. Miss Warner meantime headed another set, with Mr. Lermont, who was too gallant a character to suffer his host's daughter to miss this attention from himself. Like most elderly gentlemen, he danced in capital time, and performed his steps with great exactness—bowed as he turned each lady—and showed off, to full perfection, that virtue of the old school, a benevolent attention to the happiness of others. Rosabel's eyes were affectionately fixed upon the good old man, when a rumour that Captain Ashbrook had entered the room, made her turn her head another way.

Rosabel was dancing with Henry Warner; but Captain Ashbrook must have been blind, if he had not observed that every look and thought were directed towards himself:—he

saw it, indeed, with the deepest interest and delight; new views of happiness were opening upon him: after nine or ten years of active duty, in an arduous profession, he conceived himself entitled to retire to a life of peace and of utility at home, should inclination or duty prompt him to adopt that agreeable alternative. Like most men of virtuous habits and kind dispositions, he wished to marry, and to settle upon his own estate:—and to this there appeared to be no obstacle. His fortune was already large, and he had every prospect of succeeding to the estates and title of his uncle, before the progress of years should prevent him from being able to enjoy such additional honours. It is true, that he had hitherto looked to an honourable career in his profession as the course in life which, of all others, he would chuse; but, after a two years' residence at home, new interests and wishes would spring up, and it was allowable and natural that they should be indulged.

Under these circumstances, Captain Ashbrook had become attached to Rosabel, without any other anxiety on the subject than the doubt of a full return. For he considered that a young

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lady in her situation, unkindly treated as she was at home, might be apt to mistake gratitude for love, or to construe a desire to be emancipated from domestic controul into a decided preference. His was not the impetuous fancy of a boy, who would carry off the prize at any risk ; but the refined, and steady, strong attachment of a man of reflection and experience, tenacious, like all persons of delicacy, as to a full and sincere return ; and, like all the sentiments of matured and cultivated minds, far deeper, far more intense, than the flickering prepossessions of extreme youth. Perhaps, no man is ready to fall in love until he is thirty :—and it is probably owing chiefly to this,—that women have, in general, a far better chance of felicity in selecting men a good deal older than themselves, as husbands, than when they trust their happiness with men neither older nor wiser than themselves, and who have not yet learned to estimate, as it should be estimated, the female character.

Rosabel had exchanged Mr. Henry Warner as a partner for Captain Ashbrook, when a rumour that Sir John was arrived, again drew her attention to the door. Her father had been

standing there for some minutes ; and as she met his glance, it seemed to her that she had, on the present occasion, nothing to fear from his displeasure. She was relieved, because she remembered his cautioning her not to cultivate an intimacy with Captain Ashbook, which might, under present circumstances, be unpleasant—and yet why unpleasant ?—to Charlotte. But Sir John's feelings, as he gazed upon his daughter, were any thing but those of disapprobation. It was some years since he had seen her dance ; and as she entered into that diversion with all the elasticity of youth, her father's eyes were moistened with delight and pride. Before, he had seen her only as a child ; but now she was rising into womanhood, the playfulness of a girl exalted by a something of modesty and dignity, and an expression of intelligence mingled with the beaming sweetness of her laughing eyes. She was one upon whom a parent's gaze might well be riveted. 'The Spectator mentions a pretty incident of this sort—doubtless, borrowed from life—for what father's or mother's heart could not supply a thousand such passages ?

Sir John looked, and looked again, at

Captain Ashbrook and his daughter—and a mist seemed to be cleared away from his mental vision. If he had not been told that it was Charlotte, to whom Captain Ashbrook was paying his attentions, he should have said that it was Rosabel—not that he would have thought much upon the subject; men of a certain description, grave men of business, and particularly fathers, are very obtuse in such matters. The days of imagination are over with them; and they wonder what their sons and daughters mean by such fooleries as falling into love, and why they cannot be happy as they are. Mr. Warner, in this respect, resembled Sir John—both these gentlemen being deprived of that mediating character, a wife, who, to pave the way to certain proposals, can take opportunities of hinting that “Mr. A. is looking very kindly upon Miss B.”—“William is riding over very often to see Susan”—“Captain D— calls very frequently—supposes either for Ellen or Henrietta.” By such hints the mind of that blind mortal, a father, is generally enlightened, though it is often a difficult task to instil some notions into it. Sir John, somewhat puzzled, and thinking more on the subject of

love than he had done for five and twenty years, drove silently home with Mr. Lermont, Rosabel, and Hubert; nor did he hear the praises which good Mr. Lermont was lavishing, in the plenitude of his kindness, upon Mr. Warner and his family, down to the little ones, who came in for almonds and raisins after dinner.

Sir John felt, or endeavoured to feel, the same affection for both his elder daughters. He had been happy when he heard that Charlotte was thought likely to make so good a settlement as a marriage with Captain Ashbrook might be considered. He thought he might even be better pleased, if Captain Ashbrook's choice fell upon Rosabel, so that Charlotte were not disappointed. His own circumstances had been for many years in a great degree embarrassed; his eldest son had been very extravagant, and was still a burden upon his father: Hubert, alone, seemed likely to get out into the world advantageously, and to relieve his father of any expense for him; for he had already obtained a commission. Under these circumstances, it was, indeed, desirable that Sir John should marry his daughters advantageously.

It so happened that Mr. Lermont and Mrs. Waldegrave met, in innocent tête-a-tête, the following morning before breakfast. Good Mr. Lermont was full of the events of the foregoing day:—"Mr. Warner was so hospitable, the Miss Warners so comely and affable;" but no one looked to his mind so well as his favourite Miss Rosa; "and it is my fancy, Mrs. Waldegrave, that Captain Ashbrook is of the same opinion; and that he looks very kindly upon my young friend. But, indeed," added the old man, his ruddy face growing rubicund as he spoke, "who can wonder at that? You're silent—Ah, my dear madam, it requires no conjuror to guess that you're fearful of appearing too proud—too fond, as, indeed, most aunts and uncles are. It was a common observation of my dear, late, lamented mother, that aunts were more apt to spoil their nieces, even than mothers their daughters."

"Your mother, sir?" cried Hubert, in astonishment—had you a mother? I mean to say, within the last forty years or so?"

"My worthy, and I will add, since you must have it so, my venerable mother deceased just three years ago; and it's not probable that I

should forget her sayings and her old saws directly.—But to come back to the point,—Miss Rosa's far too young to be married as yet; but then it would be expedient for her to be looking forward to it."

"That all women do in good time," observed Hubert.

"But, I presume," said Mrs. Waldegrave, "it is Miss Fortescue's turn to be thought of first; and I suppose, sir, you would, in justice, in propriety, wish it to be so?"

"Certainly—that is, if the gentlemen and the young ladies are of the same mind," replied Mr. Lermont.

"I wish to Heaven he *would* take Charlotte," said Hubert. "She's grown mighty high and fine lately—can't associate with this person—can't notice that—must'nt sanction a third—so that altogether, with this handful of acquaintance that we have, we have not half a dozen acquaintance worth knowing."

"You forget, Hubert," said Mrs. Waldegrave, the Churchills, the Goodyers—"

"The Smiths, and Dickons's, and the Percivals," added Aunt Alice, eagerly.

"Pshaw!—toujours perdrix—all as old as



Methusalem, and as old-fashioned as Moses—the Churchills, a stupid old couple, who have not imbibed a new idea for these twenty years—the Miss Goodyers, two old maids as stiff and thin as a pair of silver candlesticks—the Percivals, fat easy people, always half asleep—moving bolsters—talking feather-beds!”

His two aunts were struck dumb with horror and amazement.

“ I am shocked, Hubert, to hear you talk so of your father’s family friends,” exclaimed Aunt Alice, as soon as she could regain her breath, and almost gasping.

“ —Of the proper set—and the only set in which you ought to visit, Hubert,” added Mrs. Waldegrave.

“ And of some very worthy persons too, I dare to say,” said Mr. Lermont; “ but young gentlemen of Master Hubert’s age are apt to be particular.”

“ When you have seen as much of the world as we have,” continued Aunt Alice—

“ And as much good society,” added Aunt Waldegrave—

“ And as many years, and as much wisdom,

Aunt Alice," said Hubert.—" And then those stupid old Lovaines," he began again—

This was absolute sacrilege ; and though Hubert, a spoiled, bold youth, might usually say any thing, the person of Lord Lovaine and " my lady " were sacred as Majesty itself. Mr. Lermont saw the lowering storm, and hastened to avert it, by bringing back the conversation to an agreeable subject.

" Well, grant that Miss Charlotte's to be married first," he said (laying his finger on Mrs. Waldegrave's arm); " for I always commend, in this respect, the conduct of Sir Thomas Moore, our first lay-chancellor—high-chancellor, who paid his court to two gentlewomen, and married the elder, though he preferred the younger ; but he considered that the elder sister's feelings might be wounded if he married her younger sister first: and who knows but that Captain Ashbrook may act in the same gentlemanlike way."

" The greater fool he, if he does," said Hubert.

" Captain Ashbrook, if he has eyes, ears, senses, must prefer Charlotte," said Mrs. Waldegrave—" Rosabel is not fit to be the

wife of a sensible man, and is so immeasurably behind her sister."

"So much less of a lady," interposed Alice—the usual burden of her song.

Mr. Lermont fidgetted, and turned about from one sister to another, too polite to contradict, too sincere to agree, and too anxious to assist and benefit all parties, to drop the subject; and the good old man could not be persuaded, against his reason, that marriages were to be made by the rule-of-three, or that Captain Ashbrook would fall in love at Mrs. Waldegrave's bidding."

"I'll tell you what, good ladies—I am fond of Miss Rosa, and I am equally fond of Miss Charlotte, too,"—this was one of those amiable little fibs allowed by the old school of minor morals,—“and one may suit one taste—and one, another. Miss Charlotte's fair and delicate—slight and genteel—I admire her vastly—she's more, doubtless, to many people's taste than Miss Rosabel,—who's quite a gay, random, thoughtless little lass,” he continued, his manner warming into a natural enthusiasm as he spoke. “She is not by near so composed a person as her sister: but she's just such a gene-

rous, lively, artless little body, that every one loves!—and I do, I am sure,” he concluded, as he walked to and fro, “for her own sake—for her good father’s—for her poor mother’s, whom she much resembles.”

“My mother was a good deal taller,” said Hubert, in a serious, subdued tone, “and much handsomer, I know.”

“My poor dear sister was accounted a beauty—which no one can mistake Rosa to be,” said Mrs. Waldegrave, “especially as she has no manners; but she improves, and, all things being over-looked and forgotten—the story to which I allude will do for our private ear, sir—Rosa might have her chance with Captain Ashbrook; but then, we rather suspect she has set her heart in another quarter, somewhere to the eastward,” she added, looking towards Mr. Warner’s new residence.

“Aye, sure! Well, I thought I observed something of that,” said Mr. Lermont, stopping short: “he’s a fine creature too, and very well behaved, and well-minded as to his politics too! he took part with me in our disputes after dinner, as to the tea question, when—”

“Young Warner I suppose you are thinking

of, sir?" said Hubert; "you are not fixing upon the widower for my sister, are you? No--leave the old fellow and his dozen of children for Aunt Alice here."

"Good patience, Hubert!"—

—"If my brother would ever consent," interposed Mrs. Waldegrave.

"Consent!—could he have the heart to refuse?" said Mr. Lermont. "And depend on my good offices, madam, if all be convenient, and if the young gentleman prove worthy of Rosabel. Ah! who could but be kind to her! There she comes, bounding along, with the child in her hand—God bless her very heart!—how like she steps to her father!"—and the worthy gentleman hastened out of doors to meet his young favourite.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“ And here we wander in illusions ;  
 Some blessed power deliver us from hence ! ”  
 COMEDY OF ERRORS.

IT cost Mr. Lermont some hours of reflection, how to forward the supposed wishes of his young friend Rosabel, whose interest with her father he understood to be at a low ebb—a circumstance attributable, according to Mrs. Waldegrave, to Rosabel’s early acts of insubordination ; especially to her flight from an indulgent home. Mr. Lermont listened to all the details of the case given him by Mrs. Waldegrave, with repeated exclamations of “ that was wrong, indeed ; poor thing, she’s misled, you see—very imprudent—a sad business, poor dear ! Well, you brought her home again, and all was forgiven—that’s right.”

Having heard all this, it became evident to him—first, that Rosabel had, from that very

period felt a considerable interest in young Henry Warner; which had been fostered by her intimacy with his sisters; brought to a crisis by his accident at the farm; and, finally, blown into a flame at Mr. Warner's house-warming. This conviction accounted for Rosabel's anxiety to go to the party at the Hill, and for many other little observations on her part on the family there. "She loves them all, poor thing," thought Mr. Lermont, "and why should she not?—they are none of them in the leather way now; and, if Rosa can make up her mind to it, our objection would be, as the old song says, 'all leather and prunella.'"

Then, as to Captain Ashbrook, it was evident, according to Mrs. Waldegrave, that he was looking after one or other of the young ladies, and all the country gave him to Miss Fortescue; and it would be very hard upon her, poor girl, to see her younger sister preferred by both—the only two beaux in the neighbourhood. So, although Mr. Lermont did not give up the opinion, that Captain Ashbrook had a little preference for Rosabel, he quite agreed with Mrs. Waldegrave as to the propriety of putting Miss Fortescue forward upon

all occasions in his company. Indeed, the worthy gentleman had such a confidence in his own influence, which it was his weakness to think paramount, that he felt assured he could advantageously put in a word for poor Miss Charlotte with the Captain—turn the current into the right channel, and benefit all parties, to his heart's content. Long accustomed to the business of doing favours, interceding for favours; influencing this great man, persuading that; writing to persons in power, promising assistance to those not in power;—this benevolent person now undertook, during his retirement from arduous duties, that most arduous of all undertakings—the management of a love affair—a species of business in which his experience lay some thirty years back; so that the difficulties of the only transaction of the sort, in which he had ever had any personal interest, were effaced from recollection—its pleasures only remembered, its anxieties ‘clean forgotten.’”

Armed with the best intentions, and restless from the excitement of wishing to do something, the old gentleman fidgeted in and out of the house, several mornings, on the look



out, in case Captain Ashbrook or Henry Warner should call. It was his scheme to intercept the former, and, in the course of a turn in the shrubbery, before entering the house, to manage to introduce an encomium upon Miss Fortescue's domestic virtues, her love of flowers, and of children; his hopes of seeing her well married before he died—how well her mother had become the head of her table, &c. &c.

Then, with regard to Henry Warner, his cue was, to see that he had access to the lady of his heart, who was seldom in the state rooms of the Hall, but immured in some dressing-room, study, or school-room wing of the building. It would also be necessary, Mr. Lermont thought, for him to stand about, to give countenance to the young people, to look as if the call were on him,—to smooth Sir John's anger in case of an interruption.

Accordingly, for a day or two, Mr. Lermont was unusually idle, pottering about with his hands behind him, his head turned back, and his eyes towards the park gate. Poor old gentleman, he could not, for the world, imagine any affair going on well without him. However, for two days, his office of match-maker

- was a sinecure. Captain Ashbrook came not, neither did Henry Warner ; and Mr. Lermont began to find an accumulation of other business upon his hands ; for he was a man of a most extensive correspondence. Every day, at breakfast, when the post bag was brought in and unlocked, large pacquets, franked by different persons, high in office, or by noblemen ; others, post-paid, as if by suitors, were handed over, with Sir John's accustomed speech of—  
 “ Well, sir, as usual, you have as many letters as the secretary of state.” And then the old gentleman was usually all the morning answering these letters, taking copies of what he wrote, enclosing and re-enclosing, and never happy if he could not read his elaborate epistles over to some one or other. Sir John usually got out of the way ; or, if he listened to them, blamed his old friend for taking so much trouble, often for persons of whom he knew little. Mrs. Waldegrave's cold approval and doubts did not suit the warm-hearted, zealous old gentleman ; of Charlotte, and her cold freezing manner, he was afraid : Miss Alice was always busy remodelling, or causing to be remodelled—or, as Lady Lovaine called

it, intriguing with her caps and gowns : Hubert was apt to make too free ; but Rosabel was the person — Rosabel, with her thoughts fixed upon other matters, found it easy to assume the attitude of a listener ; and fancied, perhaps, that she listened, whilst she was only thinking. Rosabel always approved ; he could never go too far in his generous schemes for Rosabel : she was no critic, either as to style or orthography—never questioned the perfect wisdom of what he said—laughed, when she found that a witticism was intended to enliven the otherwise dry disquisition on business ; and was melted, if not into tears, into something resembling them, at her worthy friend's climaxes—his addresses to the feelings—his perorations, which sometimes occurred in the postscripts. She never doubted, either the extent of his influence, or the duration of those friendships which he had formed when he lived in the world, and was useful to the powerful : consequently, she entered into his hopes and wishes in a manner as sanguine as his own ; and she sympathized in his disappointments with an indignation which her old friend never indulged, and perhaps never felt ; for it was as difficult

to him to blame, as it is to many others to praise. Rosabel, therefore, usually sat with Mr. Lermont the greater part of the morning ; for her hurried, imperfect education, was now considered as completed ; and, as she was a tolerable hand at sealing and folding letters, some sort of utility was made the plea for her sitting with Mr. Lermont.

Their sanctum, or, as Sir John called it, their office, consisted of a small sitting room at the extremity of the suite of apartments, and had once been known by name, now exploded, of the breakfast parlour. There Lady Fortescue had given her orders to the housekeeper ; settled, or perhaps unsettled her accounts, in which the items " sundries," or, in other words, " profit and loss," formed a conspicuous feature. After her death, it had degenerated into a sort of work room, so called by courtesy, but actually play room, for the Miss Fortescues : for Sir John had quite abandoned it for any purposes of his own, and seldom entered an apartment where the image of a beloved and still secretly lamented wife seemed peculiarly to prevail : it is in such intimate recesses that the bereaved heart dares not to trust itself. It was now fitted up as a

room especially for Mr. Lermont: Mrs. Waldegrave not choosing to have him in the drawing room; Sir John dreading the interruption of his presence in the library.

Mr. Lermont, however, delighted in the place allotted to him, for many reasons; it reminded him of Lady Fortescue—and *he* could bear the remembrance to be hourly forced upon him—and its dullness and smallness were a safeguard against the too frequent visits of Hubert, Howard, and the younger members of the family, who made free with his pig-tail, tossed his slippers out of the window, scribbled over his paper, and made seals with his wax. Rosabel delighted also in the little dull, dark room, the green room, as it was now called; for the solitary hours which she had spent in it, often no better employed than in watching the swallows build in the corner of the window, even these hours of loneliness had endeared it to her, before another cause of attachment to it had entered within the scope of her girlish comprehension.

The window of the room, shaded by the clematis and honeysuckle, opened on the ground, and upon a path, which, skirting for some little

distance by the side of a rich shrubbery, was soon lost in the thicker woods of the park. This park, however, continued, until you might gain the boundary of Ashbrook, and it happened, by some strange coincidence, that it was a favourite walk both with Captain Ashbrook and with Rosabel. It was pleasant, too, as Mr. Lermont himself observed, to see from his sanctum the blue smoke of Ashbrook House rising behind the trees: it gave such an air of comfort to the scene: "not but that I think," said the old gentleman, fearful that he had not the entire sympathy of Rosabel,—“not but that I think the hill a finer place.”

One busy morning, when Mr. Lermont, immersed in letters which must go by this day's post, his fingers and neckcloth stained with ink, for he was the most untidy writer possible, a pen behind his ear, and a candle which had been burning an hour by his side—in all this business and confusion, two words, with some people synonymous terms—he was surprised by a visit from Captain Ashbrook, who was ushered at once into Mr. Lermont's sitting room, as he enquired for that gentleman in particular. Mr. Lermont had been so taken up with the affairs

of half-a-dozen other persons, that he had almost forgotten, by this time, the necessity there was of settling the business of Ashbrook versus Warner, or Warner versus Ashbrook. The whole concern, however, immediately rushed into his mind, especially whilst glancing at Rosabel, who was, as usual, in his sanctum—he regretted that it was not Charlotte—and, in the interim between taking off his spectacles and putting them into the case, he revolved in his mind how he could fetch up Charlotte, without leaving the two others tête-a-tête: for if, as he still suspected, Captain Ashbrook's inclination leaned towards Rosabel, by leaving them together he was fostering that attachment which would, he felt assured, be disagreeable to Rosabel, but acceptable to Charlotte. Unfortunately, this worthy man, too simple and good to deceive others, had the great defect of character—for I think it is a defect, although it may spring from an amiable disposition—of being extremely credulous; therefore he never doubted but that Mrs. Waldegrave's hints, as to the state of his favourite Rosabel's affections, were perfectly correct.

Under this impression, he fidgeted and fidg-

eted, peeped into the hall, rang the bell for his hat and walking stick ; sat down for a minute or two, got up again, and finally disappeared for a time altogether. Meanwhile, Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook consoled themselves for his absence wonderfully well. Both felt that in each other's society they enjoyed a reciprocity of feeling which inspires the most cursory remarks with interest. Both knew, or fancied, that their concerns, their thoughts, their occupations were mutually interesting ; and hence, as, in the company of those we love, is often the case, the conversation had almost an egotistical turn. At length they rose, and strolled out ; Rosabel not without some trepidation—some portion of that fear “which looks behind”—some dread of inquisitive eyes from a certain part of the house where her aunts' room was situated ; but a stronger feeling than even this dread impelled her, and, with her usual recklessness of consequences, away she went.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lermont had obtruded into the drawing-room, where Charlotte, unconscious of all that was passing below, sat at her tambour frame, her delicate cheek shaded by




the fair hair, not a single curl of which had been disturbed by early exercise. The personal charms of Charlotte consisted entirely in the delicacy of her complexion, and in a certain symmetry of form and feature, which did not, however, amount to any elevated style of beauty. Compared to Rosabel, she was like a portrait in water-colour by the side of a rich oil painting. Nor were there any of those fleeting variations, those expressions of mind and of feeling, which give to our admiration of beauty the value of an intellectual tribute, and stamp upon the heart the memory of fascinations not altogether evanescent. These were totally absent in Charlotte; nor were the muscles of her countenance, or the arrangements of her dress, ever disturbed by those eager impulses and hasty movements which are among the chief attributes of youth. Already the cut of her garments, her gait, her voice, began to resemble those of her aunt Mrs. Waldegrave; and a fearful chilliness of manner, a painful narrowness of opinion, to pervade her general characteristics. Mr. Lermont, as he advanced with eagerness into the room, stopped short; his

ardour in her cause almost frozen by her unbending manner, and by the cold and unmeaning glance with which she regarded him.

“Ah! she’s not like the family—she’s far inferior to her sister!” was the thought which checked him as he stopped short at the door—his shoes down at the heels, his black coat, for he had worn black ever since his wife’s death, quite white at the elbows—and remembered his attire, of which he should not have thought, had it been Rosabel to whom he was talking. He had, however, so much love for all his friend’s family, so much innate goodness himself, that a faint smile from Charlotte, if smile it could be called which scarcely broke upon the repose of her features, and the salutation, “Well, Mr. Lermont, we have not seen you here for an age!” revived all his previous schemes in her favour.

“Miss Charlotte, here, come along with me,” he said, with a boding look at Mrs. Waldegrave, who sat at the extremity of a settee, looking, as if to lean back would have been too great a condescension, if indeed she could have leaned back upon an article of furniture which the taste, or rather the indolence of modern days has discarded; a seat which offered the show of repose, without the reality.



“Your good aunt will permit me, I know, to run away with you,” added Mr. Lermont, drawing the young lady’s arm within his, and bustling with her out of the room, as if the fate of nations had depended upon their exit. They reached the sanctum, but no sounds of voices were heard within: Rosabel and Captain Askbrook were gone: and Mr. Henry Warner, who had walked over to pay his respects particularly to Mr. Lermont, was the only occupant of the apartment.

What was to be done? Poor Mr. Lermont, after welcoming his young guest, moved anxiously to the window, and discerned Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook, walking at their usual brisk pace towards a small ascent, crowned with a grove, which at this early season, for it was towards the close of March, presented but few attractions.

“They will be standing there, looking at the view, now,” said the old gentleman to himself. “Miss Charlotte, what say you to a walk?” he added, aloud. “You are not like your sister, Miss Rosa there, who goes out as I see, without either head or neck on: but perhaps you’ll venture in a calash?”

“I have a handkerchief, sir, and Ford can

send for my bonnet," replied Charlotte, coldly, as she rung the bell. "Oh! Captain Ashbrook is with my sister, I see," she continued, with the same unaltered countenance. "Well! I think I will brave the cold, my maid is always so long."

"This way, then," cried Mr. Lermont, eagerly. "Your sister walks so fast," he added, walking away himself with all the ardour of pursuit; and to do his companions justice, they did their best to keep up with him. Charlotte's colour, for a wonder, came and went, and there was a something like an expression of anxiety in her countenance. All at once, it occurred to Mr. Lermont, that he could meet the inconsiderate pair by a nearer path, and intercept their course; so, after a few hurried words, he set off for that purpose, leaving Miss Fortescue and Mr. Warner tête-a-tête. Neither of these two persons liked each other. Charlotte looked down upon the Warners, as people every way inferior to her, and Henry Warner had seen and heard quite enough of Miss Fortescue, to be certain that she had neither heart nor mind. She suffered, too, in his estimation, by a comparison with Rosabel; of whose mental

and personal charms he was an humble and hopeless admirer. This tête-a-tête, therefore, was but little enlivened by conversation : and a stranger, meeting the unhappy pair, might have thought they were spell-bound to preserve silence. Charlotte's demeanour was so frigid, her face so statue-like ; and Mr. Henry Warner moved on with a gravity of deportment which would have suited a funeral.

Very different was the condition of the couple whom they were pursuing. At times, Charlotte caught glimpses of them, when the sight was any thing but consoling to her, and her equally disappointed companion ; for Captain Ashbrook and Rosabel moved along as if they had forgotten that any one might be behind them : he, in earnest and animated conversation, evidently quite absorbed in his companion :—stopping now and then, as if to point out a favourite object, or to delay perhaps moments which might seem to fleet. It was not, apparently, that they entered the slight conversation of indifference, and that they enjoyed the thoughtless laugh of youth ; their discourse appeared almost serious : what could it be ?

Charlotte, selfish upon principle, and tena-

cious about what she conceived to be her own rights, began to feel angry with Rosabel for her interposition between herself and him whom all the world had assigned to her. She grew more and more dissatisfied with her present companion—felt herself neglected ; and gave herself no trouble, either to volunteer observations, or scarcely reply to his. He, on the other hand, equally disappointed, and his heart more really interested, offended with the one sister, and tantalized, every now and then, with a distant vision of the other, wished himself any where but where he was ; and a proud, angry, disdainful expression settled upon a countenance usually animated and agreeable.

At last, the pursuers and pursued came in contact. - Rosabel and her companion chose, for some reason not obvious, to turn away from the walk ; and, after some mysterious rambles, came unexpectedly upon Charlotte and her despised attendant ; for companion he could not be called. Charlotte, before she saw the truant pair, could hear Captain Ashbrook saying :—

“ Then you agree with me, that a break in the avenue will be an advantage, and no profan-

ation ? It shall be done immediately. I was thinking of inserting painted glass windows in the Hall.—Do you like painted glass ?” But here they were encountered by Miss Fortescue, and Captain Ashbrook had not the benefit of Rosabel’s opinion upon the windows, painted or not, of his Hall.

“ How fast you walk !” said Charlotte, her glance first passing over Captain Ashbrook, and then fixing upon Rosabel, with that half-motivory, half-contemptuous look, which she considered, from Mrs. Waldegrave’s tuition, herself privileged to pursue to such graceless characters as younger brothers and sisters.

“ Not fast, I think,” remarked Henry Warner, “ we have been more than half an hour walking ; you set out sooner, I think, than we did, Captain Ashbrook.”

“ You speak as if you were envious of our speed,” replied Captain Ashbrook, looking at him.—“ But here is Mr. Lermont ; and he appears so agitated, that I fear he has some bad news to communicate.—Well, sir ?”

“ My dear Miss Rosa—my worthy friend, Captain Ashbrook— you will be accountable for a fit of apoplexy, or a sciatica, if you make

me run after you so," cried the good old gentleman, his face radiant with heat.

"Nay, sir," said Rosabel, playfully, "it was you who first ran away from us."

"What a beautiful glow," thought Henry Warner to himself, "the wind has brought into her face; no wonder that Captain Ashbrook has found his walk so agreeable."

"We were saying," resumed Captain Ashbrook, "that if a branch or two of those old elms were lopped off, or even," he added, reluctantly, "a tree were cut down, we might—I mean to say—there might be a favourable glimpse of Ashbrook from this very spot; that gable end, of which we catch the point, now that the trees are leafless, would look well, and would break the, perhaps, too thick foliage." He half turned to Rosabel as he spoke.

"I think it just depends upon opinion," said Mr. Lermont.

"It is quite a matter of taste," said Charlotte.

"I thought you were calling it sacrilege, the other day," remarked Henry Warner, to touch one of those old elms."

"Yes; but I have altered my opinion—I



see things in a different point of view to-day," replied Captain Ashbrook.

"That I have no doubt of," said Mr. Lermont; it depends so much on the company we are in, in what point of view we see things. You are willing to oblige your friends and neighbours with a prospect of your mansion : that is very good, very well thought of. What is Miss Charlotte's opinion on the subject?"

"Oh, I—" answered Charlotte, coldly, "am not a person of taste, and need not be consulted in such matters." Her eye rested, for an instant, contemptuously upon her sister's glowing countenance.

Rosabel, quickly alive to all Charlotte's indications of feeling, answered that glance by saying, in a fond tone—"Oh yes, you are, Charlotte—much more than I am," she was going to say, but she broke off, merely adding, "no one has so much taste as Charlotte; Aunt Waldegrave says so."

Her warmth of manner, and her sister's coldness, formed indeed a striking contrast : and a few minutes of silence prevailed. Captain Ashbrook could not withdraw his eyes

from the last speaker, whilst those of Henry Warner were bent upon the ground. At last the little coterie moved onwards ; Mr. Lermont thinking it prudent to secure Rosabel to himself, whilst Henry Warner walked beside him ; and Charlotte was left, as was her due, according to Mrs. Waldegrave, under the eligible guidance of Captain Ashbrook.

“ It will not do,” thought Mr. Lermont to himself, as he sauntered home, dropping back after young Warner and Rosabel ; “ the Captain hangs in the wind, as the sailors say ; the other affair goes on prosperously—too prosperously, perhaps—poor Rosabel,” thought he, as he raised his head and looked at her—Rosa is happy, now she is with the right man. God bless her, and may God grant that her father be propitious to her wishes. I must try my influence *that way* ;”—and, happy in the notion that his influence could be available any way, Mr. Lermont bustled in after the young people.

## CHAPTER XIX.

"Some honour I would have,  
Not from good deeds, but good alone."

COWLEY.

MR. LERMONT's whole energies, for the few days following this incident, were directed to the forwarding of what he conceived to be Rosabel's wishes; softening Sir John's prejudices, seeking the aid of Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice, and promoting a frequent communication between Rosabel and the family at the Hill. With these designs, he harassed and disappointed the poor girl as much as possible; took her twice out of the way when Captain Ashbrook was expected to call; infused into the mind of that individual doubts as to Rosabel's sentiments to himself; and cherished fallacious hopes in Henry, who had never, hitherto, even ventured to think of Rosa-

bel, but as a prize far above his grasp. His father began to joke him, and Phillis and Amy to rejoice at Rosabel's frequent visits to the Hill; always, it is true, brought thither by Mr. Lermont, sometimes on foot, sometimes in a rumbling old phaeton, which had stood in the coach-house for years, but which was now brought out at Mr. Lermont's petition, as it could hold only two with any convenience, and furnished a pretext for their tête-a-tête drives. Rosabel, fond of the Miss Warners, and glad to escape from home at any rate, and in hopes of encountering Captain Ashbrook, gave unwittingly into the old gentleman's schemes, not having the slightest notion of his actual intentions.

“ I really begin to think, aunt, that Rosa and Mr. Lermont will make a match of it,” said Hubert, as he stood one day looking out of the window. “ Aunt Alice, you will have to wear the willow. Look at them coming down the hill, the old fellow driving, and Rosabel with her hat flying back—what a figure! Ha! who is that overtaking them? Lady Lovaine, in her old coach, I declare; her monkey looking out of the window! My lord inside, I suppose,

attended by pillows and bolsters ; and the old stick of a footman outside."

Mrs. Waldegrave, who had been out of humour all the morning, smoothed her brow at this intelligence, and assumed that meek, placid look with which ill-tempered persons sometimes know how to veil their actual dispositions.

The voice of Lady Lovaine in the hall was very soon audible.

" Well, it is a call—take it for granted. My lord is enveloped in cotton wool to-day—cannot stir out—wind easterly. I never allow either him or Joco to stir out in an easterly wind.—You must all come," she added, as she entered the drawing-room, "to a family party on Wednesday. It is Ashbrook's birth-day ; and, as he is our heir, our son by adoption, we cannot pass over so important an occasion. We will not say what his age is.—Where is Rosabel ? Let us be satisfied with the pleasing certainty that he will live to see me and Lord Lovaine low, low, low.

" Alice, we shall expect you among the young people ; and my favourite, Miss Rosabel, of course ; and her brother, who, if I doubt not, will make many a young heart

ache. A flirt, is he not, betimes ? Mrs. Waldegrave, we reckon upon you and Miss Fortescue. Alas ! what is so miserable as a family party !”

“ We should all feel honoured,” Mrs. Waldegrave began—

“ Well then, do ; and let me take it for granted—”

“ But permit me to say—Hubert, I fear, is engaged on that day : I know nothing of Sir John’s movements : and Rosa, my lady, allow me to observe, is too young to enter into dinner visits : you would not, I am sure, sanction such a thing ; nor could I believe it to be right.”

“ I do—I shall,” replied Lady Lovaine, inflexibly. “ I will not only sanction, but have her.—What ! leave my pretty Rosa at home ! the belle and attraction of the whole party ! No, no : what would Ashbrook say to that ?”

“ Hush, hush,” cried Mrs. Waldegrave, in consternation, and looking round to see if her nieces were there. Rosabel only was present.

“ I can assure you, sister Waldegrave, your generalship will be all thrown away upon Charlotte, in this instance. Rosabel is his attraction ; Rosabel is mine. Not that you ought to

be even thinking of marriage at your age, child," she added, sternly looking round at Rosabel, who stood at a little distance, her consciousness and confusion strongly counter-acted by her curiosity. "It would be far better for you to be at your lessons, or working at your sampler, child, than thinking of such matters,—or listening to two old women's tales."

"Rosabel, withdraw," said Mrs. Waldegrave, in the mildest possible tone, whilst her face was pale with rage.

"Miss Fortescue, I tell you," pursued Lady Lovaine, as she seated herself on the chair nearest to her, "will never attract a man of Captain Ashbrook's sort—a man all soul and sentiment; though I hold such things to be very absurd and inconvenient; but still it is so: and he is well enough for a lord to be. I suppose he will not disgrace his predecessor—Heigho!"

"He's a fine creature! a gentlemanly fellow!" said Mr. Lermont, who came from an inner room, with three or four half-opened letters in his hand. "And what a pleasant, mild, well-bred, clever, sensible young man, is

that Mr. Henry Warner. Miss Rosabel is vastly fond of the sisters, and really seems herself just like one of the family."

"I hope not!" exclaimed Lady Lovaine. "As I have the honour to be connected myself with Sir John Fortescue's family, I am not at all ambitious of that sort of addenda to it. Mrs. Waldegrave, what say you? But, no, no; Miss Rosabel is destined for better things. *He* will do for the fourth or fifth sister. I have laid an embargo upon Rosabel."

"Oh, certainly!" interposed Mrs. Waldegrave, with a laugh so forced that it almost assumed the character of a convulsive twitch; "but the inclinations, my lady, are so much studied in the present day; young ladies must now have their own way in these matters. I fear we cannot contend against custom. Formerly, young persons were not consulted; but now, they consider themselves quite a party concerned."

"And so they are;—yet they have no right to decline an advantageous proposal," replied Lady Lovaine; "nor shall, nor will, Rosabel. And, to 'make assurance doubly sure,' I will have her under my own eye at Medlicote for a



few days. Of course, sister Waldegrave, you will consent to what is so very much for your niece's advantage? Where is the child? Do not trouble yourself: I will take upon myself the whole responsibility with Sir John. Don't hurry yourself, don't hurry yourself, sister Waldegrave! she is in the school-room, I suppose?—where, indeed, she ought to be. This way?—that way? I hope she is not troubling her head, as yet, with matrimonial matters. But, certainly, she must not be allowed to refuse Ashbrook for all the Warners in existence."

"But, my lady," interposed Mr. Lermont, who now stepped forward to Mrs. Waldegrave's assistance, "in these affairs of the heart, you know—"

"A heart! what has she to do with a heart? And is not Ashbrook the man to engage any girl's heart?—Handsome,—at least, passably so: he takes after my lord's family; they all have *that*—but I weary myself arguing the matter—And all this while there is Lovel, our parish doctor, waiting to consult me about a poor man's leg. The school will be in the last confusion! Our Lead teacher is on a pleasure

jaunt to-day. I wonder what poor people have to do with pleasure jaunts, or with hearts!—things both unnecessary. Well, I suppose, like all young ladies, she will be an hour at her toilet before I can take her. ‘In that how admirable, Clarissa!’ I cannot endure novels!—cannot read them—they make me sick! But *Clarissa is a pattern.*”

“Quite a pattern,” echoed Mrs. Waldegrave.

“Quite so,” said Aunt Alice.

“She,” pursued Lady Lovaine, without noticing either of these assents, “could always dress in half an hour, and was seemly and gentlewomanlike in that time; whilst her sister, Arabella——Bless me! it is one o’clock—this woman’s leg—never could make herself fit to be seen—a shower coming on, I think—in double the time. Hah! Sir John, how do you do? I was coming in search of you, to request you to let me run away with your second daughter, who takes my fancy vastly.”

“Your ladyship does her much honour,” answered Sir John, gravely; “and I feel the kindness the more, that it is extended to Rosabel, who has few opportunities of cultivating the good-will of her friends; but—”

“ Oh, I see you consent ; and, as Mrs. Waldegrave has not, cannot, have any objection, it is a settled thing. Oh, as to her wardrobe, you know Medlicote is quite a seclusion, an absolute Noah’s ark : do not trouble yourself ; we are not particular : and if the child should be a little old-fashioned, she will suit the place better. I abominate—don’t you ?—these sleeves that are the mode ! so long ; even below the elbow. Women are so ashamed of their arms now-a-days ; there will not be an arm fit to be seen in the next century. I am glad Rosabel still keeps to the proper, discreet, becoming short sleeve\*.”

“ I quite agree with your ladyship,” replied Mrs. Waldegrave ; “ nothing is so becoming as a mitten ; nothing so unladylike as a long sleeve.”

“ Miss Goodyer,” interposed Aunt Alice, eager to be heard, “ and all the Goodyers, are famous for their arms ; and, I have heard say, have their white kid mittens sown to their sleeves, every day a fresh pair, and never taken off.”

“ The important question of sleeve versus mitten is therefore,” said Lady Lovaine, “ de-

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\* The sleeve was afterwards abridged, according to the fashion adopted by the famous Mrs. Abingdon.

cided ; it is not who shall throw down, but who shall take up, the glove. By your leave, my carriage—and—Rosabella. Depend upon my lecturing her bravely, Mrs. Waldegrave, my instilling her with proper notions of what is due to herself, and to you.”—And, without heeding the suppressed ill-humour and despair of her sister-in-law, or the imitative perturbations of Aunt Alice, Lady Lovaine marched onwards towards the part of the house usually occupied by the young ladies, gave orders for Rosabel’s immediate departure with her,—overturned the serenity of the whole household ;—hurried the lady’s maid, affronted the butler, set two or three of the younger ones crying, and nearly ran over the governess. At last, Rosabel, in an agitation of surprise, which permitted her no time to bewail the unprepared state of her toilet, was bundled in after Lady Lovaine ; an imperial, containing her clothes, being, at the same time, hoisted upon the summit of the vehicle.

All seemed like a dream ; and Rosabel, like an emancipated slave, who revels in the vision of freedom, was fearful of awakening from her delusion. But she soon found,

that whatever might be her enjoyments at Medlicote, freedom was not amongst them. It was merely a change of tyrants that she had undergone; despotism still prevailed, and, perhaps, the rein was even tighter than at home. It was well that she had learned to be submissive, and that submission was, in many cases, agreeable to herself.

The first evening was one of repose, almost of gloom. Lady Lovaine was satisfied with having carried her point; and she rested tranquilly on her oars, awaiting the next day. His lordship was bilious and fretful; and his fretfulness was that of a feeble, yet wayward child, whose power consists solely in the ability to be disagreeable. Accustomed to act as a kind of keeper to her consort, Lady Lovaine, whenever she gave way in the least, had to rue her concessions; for his lordship's irritability was apt to increase to a kind of petty frenzy, which was only restrained, in the presence of Rosabel, by his extreme good breeding, that strong curb of habit in the old school. Rosabel absolutely pitied Lady Lovaine the first evening, and rejoiced when the peevish and suffering invalid was fairly quieted into his easy chair by

a dose of camphor and opium in the evening. There he sank down, having, after many apologies, drawn on his velvet night-cap, looking, on a large scale, sagacity of expression not included, like one of those waxen effigies of Voltaire in his last illness, which present the French philosopher in no very enviable condition.

“It is all very well,” whispered Lady Lovaine to Rosabel, as his lordship, after trying in vain to keep his eyes open, closed them finally—“it is all very well when people are worn out by actual disease, or vexed into a consumption by real miseries; but when, as in my lord’s case, the disease is half imaginary, and the miseries wholly so—but it is a family tendency; even Ashbrook, with all his fine qualities, has some traits of his uncle—would you believe it?”

“No, indeed, I could not,” said Rosabel, very earnestly; “I mean, at least, I do not see any resemblance.” She spoke with an emphasis, with a blush, which quite satisfied Lady Lovaine of her preference, whilst, with that pride of family opinion which was the standard ingredient of her character, she answered, almost haughtily—

“It will be well for Captain Ashbrook, if he

be ever so popular as my lord has been. Indeed, I doubt it; my lord's manners were always deemed perfection; no one so popular, I can assure you."

Rosabel was not disposed to controvert that point; and the conversation passed until bed-room candles were brought to the drawing-room door by Lady Lovaine's maid; and the vast precincts of Medlicote were soon hushed in repose.

At a distance from Mr. Lermont, Captain Ashbrook's love-suit went on prosperously, and Lady Lovaine, amidst the self-gratulations of spasms cured, gout averted, chilblains prevented, and bile fairly driven out of the field, began to add that of having rooted out Rosabel's foolish predilections, and safely established her nephew's favour in their place. With the indiscretion of feminine generalship, she could not, however, avoid hinting to Captain Ashbrook that she had thought it right to bring Rosabel away from home, in order to keep her from injurious society, or from forming injurious connections. The colour mounted into Captain Ashbrook's face; but he dismissed the feelings which arose, with the reflection that the sug-

gestion was one of Lady Lovaine's chimeras.—Indeed, he had every cause to hope, at least, that Rosabel's early prepossessions were in his own favour.

He lost no time, at any rate, in preferring his suit; and Lady Lovaine, who had, during all her married life, hated a young man loitering about the house, in here, out there, soon began to be weary of courtship. It is no slight misery to feel oneself *un de trop*.—Pardon, gracious reader, this gallicism; for it demands pardon, for there is no offence, in my opinion, so atrocious as that of the introduction of foreign phrases into our honest English narratives. Lady Lovaine, however, experienced to the full the conviction that her company was any thing but indispensable to Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook. When she staid two hours in the village, worrying the poor, she found, on her return, not that they were surprised at her absence, but that she had been gone so long as she stated. Captain Ashbrook, who had long shown her the affection, and more than the assiduity, of a son, now seemed to forget her existence. When Rosabel was present, he was all grace, animation, and enjoyment :—alone with Lady



Lovaine, she could not absorb his attention, even at the alarm of a typhus fever in the village, or upon the news of the schoolmaster's having given notice to quit. She could not even now put him out of humour, except when she talked of his regiment, or of the termination of his leave of absence.

"Thank God!" said her ladyship to herself, "we can have but one heir! and it is a great charge to have the marrying of him properly!" The child is well enough, but shows her partiality for Ashbrook much too plainly; and, with all his expectations, he will have, after all, what he has always wished—a love-match entirely; it is hardly a compliment to the family, the low account which this giddy young thing makes of titles and estates; not that she ought to begin to value Medlicote yet awhile—no—no."

My lord was less discerning; he saw no particular meaning in Rosabel's staying at Medlicote, nor in Captain Ashbrook's spending the greater part of every day there. He only thought his nephew came over to enquire after his arm.

"What! Ashbrook again? My good sir, this

is doing too much. It would be unconscionable in me to require it. Wouldn't it, Lady Lovaine? You are really prodigiously attentive. Isn't he, Miss Rosabella?"

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Lady Lovaine, as she saw Rosabel depart, when the week was completed. "I have done my duty—shewn the child what a gentleman is; kept her from low connections—secured to Ashbrook one to his mind. Just the sort of fatiguing job as with the clerk's daughter, last year; and now they may settle the rest of their affairs for themselves. I can have nothing more to do with them; especially whilst the school is in such confusion."

It was with mingled gloom and elation, that Rosabel returned to the home of her fathers. She well knew with what sentiments her female relations there would receive her. She dreaded Charlotte's coldness far more than the hard unkindness of Mrs. Waldegrave: in the latter case it was her pride, not her affection, that was wounded. She had no expectation of sympathy from any one. Hubert was too heedless, her father too stern, the rest of the family too young. She doubted not but that reprobation to a certain extent would be her fate; but all

this she could now well sustain, for she was supported by the certainty that to one heart she was exclusively dear, nor could she but look forward to a happier home, a haven of peace, where she could forget the injustice and slights which had rendered her girlhood a season of unhappiness and mortification. Armed with this support, Rosabel prepared to encounter, with temper and magnanimity, any trials of patience which might await her. She felt that she was a changed being. Age had brought its usual antidote of reason to rebellious feelings and stormy passions; and this early, very early, attachment had taught her to value herself, and had excited her ambition to become a superior being. At present, religion had little or no influence in directing her motives, and in quelling her resentment: that was to be the solace of her yet more adverse days; the monitor and comforter whom we delay to summon to our aid, until sickness or sorrow teaches the wounded spirit that for it there can be no other solace, no other support.

When Rosabel reached home, she found, however, that her absence had been employed by Mrs. Waldegrave in making arrangements

for her yet longer absence from Hales Hall. That something had passed, was evident, from the fallacious calm which sat upon the brow of her aunt, and the smile that graced, or embittered, as it might either way be thought, these words:

“Rosabel, my dear, you have so often begged and prayed to go to your Aunt Evelyn’s for awhile, that your father is persuaded to let you, dear. Good Mrs. Evelyn is overjoyed, and will be ready for you early next week.”

It may be readily conceived with what sensations this fiat was hailed.

## CHAPTER XX.

"If sometimes upon me your thoughts should stray,  
I shall have leisure memory's debt to pay."

GOETHE.

"MY father consents—my aunt expects me—even Mr. Lermont has made up his mind to it. Phillis, dear Phillis! Amy, dear Amy! do write to me, and tell me all the news; I shall hear nothing except from you. Don't fill half a side with apologies, Amy!—nor Phillis, do you criticise my letters!—but tell me all, every thing you hear, about the Hill, about home, about Ashbrook, about Medlicote."

Such were Rosabel's words, as she sat with her friends, the Warners, in the farewell visit which she made to the Hill. She longed to unburthen her heart to some one; to establish a faithful correspondence; to say why she felt melancholy at the prospect of her approaching

departure. Her partial friends guessed, as they thought, the cause of her sufferings, and Amy's sympathy dissolved itself in tears. Phillis burned to say, "dear Rosabel, we see your attachment to Henry; we understand all you feel:" but a sense of honour, of propriety restrained her. She even considered it imprudent for the young lovers, as she deemed them, to have an opportunity of taking leave of each other, in the present excited state of their feelings. Rosabel was to walk home: Mr. Lermont, after bringing her over in the phaeton, had left her, in hopes that an impending shower of rain would oblige her to stay all night. He had only been reconciled to Rosabel's departure, by the assurance that Sir John's mind would be more readily brought round to her wishes during her absence. His own private business; a visit to the under secretary of state with a petition from a widow in the Highlands;—interest to make with the East Indian Directors, in favour of a needy friend with a large family;—a commission to be procured, sans purchase, for Hubert; and half-a-dozen minor suits in hand for decayed farmers and poor villagers; made the good man think his visit to the metropolis indispensable.

How could he, also, endure the quiet of Hales Hall without Rosabel? She was the light of his days—her bounding step, her clear, soft voice gladdened his heart, whenever she approached his sanctum. He loved Hubert too; but Hubert vexed and plagued him. He esteemed Sir John, but had too many foibles to excuse in his eyes, too many derelictions from prudence to palliate to his watchful and sincere friend, to feel at ease in his presence; therefore he felt no great reluctance to depart. But to return to Rosabel.

She sat long and mournfully with her young friends, whilst a trusty female servant, aided by John, the under gardener, with umbrellas, awaited her pleasure to escort her on her return home. Phillis, dreading the consequences of a tête-a-tête with Henry, looked forth every now and then, and drew in her head, saying: “Rosa dear, if you are to go, what do you think of that cloud? I should be delighted to have you a little longer; but if it should rain—what do you say to it?”

“Phillis is always prudent,” said Amy; “she always judges right.”

“I shall envy Charlotte going to Hotham races

next week," said Rosabel, rising slowly, and tying her bonnet. "You will all be there—your brother too, I suppose ; and Lady Lovaine is patroness, Captain Ashbrook steward—I never saw any races."

"It is really quite a shame," said Amy, that you should be sent off, this way, from every gaiety. Dear Rosabel, we will write you every particular."

"Be sure," said Rosabel, tearfully, "that you mention how Charlotte looks, and who are her partners ; say how your new dresses fit, and if—if—"

"Yes ; we will tell you every thing," said Phillis ; "you shall hear all about all of us—Henry, and Papa, and all—but, mind you burn our letters."

"I don't wish to be troublesome," added Rosabel, looking down, "but could you write the very day after the race-ball ; and, if any body should ask about me, or miss me, do say. Amy, if you think of it, tell Captain Ashbrook where I am gone to, and that I mean to go and see Ellerslie, an old hereditary property of his in Derbyshire, just close—how curious!—to Aunt Evelyn's. I do not sup-



pose he ever visits it : but he has often talked to me about it."

" He is an excellent man," said Phillis, " and would make a capital match for Charlotte : he would be a great deal too old for you, Rosa ; and it is very fortunate that he has no inclination to think otherwise."

" I wish I could agree to that," thought Rosabel, as she moved reluctantly, at last, on her way homewards. Sweet and bitter thoughts occupied her reveries ; but her reflections were not wholly of a selfish character. She had her fears for the happiness of others. She saw that Hubert was engrossed by a boyish and impetuous passion for Amy Warner, and that Amy was but too deeply interested in him. Much as she esteemed her friends, that regard did not equalize their station to her own, in her eyes : she had been brought up to hold the purity of the family connection inviolate ; and she well knew that Sir John would spurn an intermarriage with the Warner family, as an invasion of his hereditary consequence and rights. She walked, therefore, musingly onwards, her attendants following her at some distance behind, so that her melancholy thoughts

had full play and scope. Thus she passed on, until a turn in the path brought to her view an object which arrested her attention. It was Ashbrook ; which, in other directions was usually shrouded by trees, but which, from this point, looked imposing, although the principal features of the house were those of a respectable antiquity, rather than of grandeur. It was now undergoing improvements and repairs ; not a chimney, indeed, was to be levelled, nor the slightest infringement upon style and character to be permitted. One corner of the house claimed kindred with the days of the Plantagenets ; and to this cherished, original portion, sundry additions had been, at various epochs, made, with as much correspondence to the ancient part as possible. New rooms were now in progress ; a music room, a larger library, and new bed rooms : and Rosabel, as she stretched an eager gaze, saw, with complicated feelings, the workmen at their labours. The sun-beams danced in a small piece of water contiguous to the house ; the first buddings of delightful spring mantled near the grey stones of the house : Rosabel looked long and earnestly, and the sight seemed to refresh her—to

fill her mind with the image of one who was the idol of her young and enthusiastic fancy—to breathe peace and hope into her mind.

She reached home, therefore, in better spirits than she had left it ; but she was met by the trying intelligence that a change had taken place in the arrangement for her departure. Two of the carriage horses were ill ; the other two, which were to take her and her attendant the first two stages, would be wanted for the Hotham races ; they must be rested in time, that was indispensable ; and, consequently, must set out sooner. And, as Mrs. Evelyn was always prepared for the reception of any of her nieces or nephews, it would be of no consequence letting her know.

“ Rosabel would be at home there,” Mrs. Waldegrave said, with a smile ; which, like the east wind on a sunny day, cuts one through and through with a semblance of kindness. Rosabel’s convenience must therefore bend to the general convenience. Her wardrobe was prepared—little or nothing would do for Southwell—it was quite a place to wear out one’s old dress—Mr. and Mrs. Evelyn were not visiting people.

Rosabel could brook this no longer ; her native high spirit had been suppressed by circumstances, but it had merely lain dormant. The colour deepened on her cheek, and her eye flashed with anger, as she told her Aunt that she would not go, at least for some days, unless she knew that it was Sir John's express commands that she should do so.

“ What, not to her Aunt Evelyn's ?—to the aunt whom she preferred to every one else ?—there was no pleasing some people. Once awhile she was ready enough to go—what ailed her with Aunt Evelyn now ?”

Rosabel would not say ; no one had a right to penetrate into her thoughts, except her father. She met with sympathy from no one—her eye glanced in anger upon Charlotte, who sat, apparently unconcerned in the contest, apart from the disputants. The angry glance was returned with a cold, unmeaning, reproofing gaze, which seemed to say—“ Why do you appeal to me ?—it is no affair of mine.”

Rosabel felt her heart throb with anguish, her wrath subside into the bitter pang of wounded affection. “ Charlotte !” she cried, “ from my aunts I expect no sympathy—I wish

for none ; it is you—you, who grieve me !—Charlotte—the happy days of our childhood !” she continued, her voice broken by sobs,—“ those happy days, when we loved each other, are all at an end, Charlotte, and I have no friend now—at least, here !”

Charlotte coloured, and looked down ; but, determined not to commit herself, she checked the transitory risings of natural affection, and said, calmly—

“ I don’t see why you should blame me, Rosabel ; I have nothing to do with your plans. I do not think I have acted improperly in any way ; have I, Aunt Waldegrave ? have I, Aunt Alice ?”

“ Assuredly not,” cried Mrs. Waldegrave ; “ nor are we all to be controuled by Miss Rosabel. Some persons are easily set up by imaginary attentions, and—”

“ It is a pity for young people to deceive themselves,” interposed Aunt Alice ; “ I am positive Captain Ashbrook means nothing towards Rosa, at any rate ; and that had Charlotte had the same opportunity at Medicote—”

“ How calmly the gentleman took the news this morning,” pursued Mrs. Waldegrave, “ of

Miss Rosa's approaching departure ; and how evidently his thoughts were fixed upon another person."

"He was told too," added Aunt Alice, addressing Rosabel, "that you were going away to-morrow—yet not a word."

"Was he then here?" thought Rosabel: "and shall I not see him again?" Yet pride, and a determination not to afford others a triumph over her, made her quell the bitter disappointment which this intelligence occasioned her. She stood erect, and reined in, from no very proper motives to be sure, her ever acute, sometimes misguided feelings.

"You may go to Southwell," resumed Mrs. Waldegrave, with the calmness of determined spite—"you may go to Southwell, happy, if you can be happy, that you have rivalled, or attempted to rival, your sister: a mere attempt, indeed; like most evil undertakings, it has not succeeded, although it has made her, poor thing, very miserable."

Charlotte, who, like most selfish people, wept readily, when her own misfortunes were touched upon, laid aside her tambour frame,

and began, in her own measured way, to shed tears.

“It is so hard upon the eldest,” said Aunt Alice—

“Sister, I have done,” exclaimed Mrs. Waldegrave. “However Miss Rosabel may act, it can be of no consequence eventually to her sister. In short, I am wearied with the subject. Rosabel, I recommend you—you are not to be ordered, I see—I recommend you to withdraw : your presence distresses Charlotte.”

But her words, though tempered by an air of dignified lenity, fell unheeded. Rosabel, pained, as she had been, for herself, now experienced a feeling far more poignant to her generous nature than all the varied emotions which she had suffered during this conversation. She looked at Charlotte—she saw the unwonted tears : to her imagination, her sister really appeared ill, and dejected. She still fondly loved Charlotte ; the thousand associations of infancy and childhood—the mysterious bond of nature—had still their influence over a heart affectionate and sensitive. Self reproach added its sting : she was utterly subdued, penitent, and

miserable. She felt that she would, at this moment, have relinquished every thing, even Captain Ashbrook's affection, if Charlotte could be restored to her as she had once known her, and if her own warm feelings could have scope and vent in their natural channel.

Unrestrained by the chilling presence of her aunts, and eager for forgiveness and reconciliation, she approached Charlotte, and, stooping near her work table, looked earnestly in her sister's face.

"Charlotte," she said, "is it true that I have distressed you?—that I have interfered with your hopes of happiness? If so, I shall be thankful to leave home, not only for a time, but for ever. I did not know, I did not think, that you were particularly interested in Captain Ashbrook; for I suppose it is that which my aunt means. Only tell me what I am to do—only be the same kind Charlotte to me as ever—only—" But her voice was interrupted by tears, and the rest of the sentence was inaudible.

She waited for some moments for a reply, and, again raising her head, looked earnestly at her sister—



“Charlotte, say that you love me—say that you forgive me.”

“I really do not know what you mean, Rosa.—I cannot guess what all this scene is about. You are very kind and very condescending, to give up Captain Ashbrook in my favour, before he has ever thought of you, most likely ; but I really don’t care at all about the matter.”

“Well, then, Charlotte—let us be as we once were, as we should ever be,” replied Rosabel, imploringly.

“I appeal to my aunts,” answered the prudent Charlotte, “whether I have ever behaved improperly to any one of my sisters. I really do not know what Rosa has to complain of ; do you, Aunt Waldegrave ? do you, Aunt Alice ?”

A torrent of encomiums and assents followed, with “no, my dear ; you are most exemplary ; such a pattern to your sister !—Complain of, indeed ! the complaints were all on the other side.”

“Then I shall say no more,” cried Rosabel, reddening with indignation. “Charlotte, I might have expected this from you ; but I know to what, and to whom, I may attribute

this alienation—this heart-breaking unkindness—this cruel indifference.” And, wrought up to the last pitch of irritation, she impetuously broke from the apartment, and soon obtained the repose of her own chamber.

Repose of mind was, however, at any rate, denied to Rosabel; and, like many other persons, she could not allow her body to be quiet when her spirit was restless. Action was indispensable, and, wearied as she was with her long walk in the morning, she longed to catch another parting view of Ashbrook before the day closed in.

The afternoon was windy, though clear from hitherto threatening rain, and the tall tops of the elm trees bowed, and slight branches were even torn from the parent stem, as Rosabel, not without fear of observation, passed fleetly down an avenue which extended on the side of the park nearest to Ashbrook. Bitter were the thoughts which pressed upon her mind. To injustice and coldness she had been for several years inured. Her Aunts, like many ladies who are accustomed to have their own way, were warm partizans, and bitter enemies; for it is the error of our sex to make every thing

a party matter ; to suppose that, in espousing the interests of one individual, we are justified in running down the merits of another. Rosabel had irremediably offended her aunts on many occasions ; she had wounded their pride, and even defied their power. From them she expected no mercy ; but Charlotte—ah ! how bitter was the sting which the recollection of Charlotte's conduct imparted !

Partly in sorrow, and partly in anger, she now reflected, however, that her sister had thrown away all claim to her generosity and forbearance as far as Captain Ashbrook was concerned, and that she was henceforward free to love him. I should very much depart from the truth of my narrative, did I not confess that Rosabel even felt her footsteps quickened towards Ashbrook, and her resolution to follow her inclinations stimulated, when she thought of the manner in which her sister had cast her from her, and remembered how contemptuously she had rejected all concessions on her own part. Poor Rosabel ! Retribution, which visits all wanderers from the fold of Christian charity, came also to her ill-regulated, though perhaps excusable emotions. Time, and the world, bring their

own chastening along with them. Happy are those who receive such correctives into the good seed of a mind not utterly depraved by selfishness, or hardened by frequent delinquencies.

Rosabel at length reached a little break in the woods, whence she could see a window or two,—and part of a chimney-top of Ashbrook House ; and on this precious sight her eyes rested with the fond imaginative gaze of seventeen. A very narrow lane separated the two estates ; there was only a gap in the hedge to get through, on the one side, and a ditch to jump over ; and, on the other, a five-barred gate to mount, and then any one might pass into a field, from which Rosabel had been told, by Hubert, there was to be discerned the lawn before the house, and perhaps Captain Ashbrook walking, possibly his dog, at any rate, and a peacock or two. What temptations to the love-sick and enthusiastic ! And Rosabel, with her usual disregard of consequences and appearances, scrambled through the hedge, surmounted the ditch, and was deliberating about scaling the gate, when a well-known voice, near her, made her stop in tremor. It was Captain Ashbrook, as happy and

confused as herself; or, perhaps, if possible, more so.

I must suppose my readers to be deficient in imagination, and certainly never to have been in love, if they could require to be told that, as Rosabel retraced her steps homeward, her arm resting upon that of Captain Ashbrook, disclosures on both sides took place; which would have electrified Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice, had they not been happily unconscious of such proceedings. Captain Ashbrook was all anxiety to arrest Rosabel's journey to Southwell, by a direct proposal to her father; but to this there were some obstacles, for pressing military business, at this time, called him to London, and he knew that Rosabel would be happier with Mrs. Evelyn than at home, in her present state of feeling.

Rosabel, on the other hand, happy as she felt she ought to be, secretly reproached herself with the dread of inflicting suffering upon Charlotte; and desired, although she could not allege the reason, that no mention should be made of their now acknowledged attachment until after her return from Southwell; for she felt her heart more softened to her sister by

her own present happiness, than it would have been by a hundred lectures, or by many moments of solitary reflection. Correspondence, without which our degenerate modern lovers could not exist a week, was proposed by Captain Ashbrook, but instantly rejected; for, in *those days*, the parental consent was held in reverence; and, before that had been formally obtained, such a communication would have been deemed dishonourable on the one side, and undutiful on the other. An absence of a few weeks would be nothing; and Rosabel's return would be hailed by an immediate proposal on Captain Ashbrook's part, made in all due form, and to be followed by rent-rolls and settlements; about which one party cared as little, and the other knew as little, as any two persons breathing.

Both Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook were, in the common acceptation of the word, extremely happy;—but, are people happy immediately after entering into a decided engagement to be married? I deem the actual nature of the feeling to be very questionable; like taking the shower-bath—you will, and you will not; your whole intellectual and corporeal

system suffers a shock—it is some time before you can recover, what is so much for your benefit ; and the glow of delight which ensues, is preceded by a shivering fit.

Rosabel perhaps felt, on this occasion, the most intensely ; neither had she the prudence nor the art to conceal, if she had wished to do so, what passed in her mind. To her, the novelty of being beloved, was the more exhilarating from the contrast with the depressing effects of unjust partiality and neglect at home ; yet such poignant concern for her sister was mingled with what she considered her own selfish felicity, that when Captain Ashbrook, with the ardour of a man for the first time really in love, entreated her at least to allow him to consider their engagement as final, in all save the consent of Sir John, she almost shrunk back, as if she had taken a step of which she already repented. Captain Ashbrook, like all persons whose attachment is worth securing, was confiding, but not presuming, and was even diffident and apprehensive where his affections were really touched. He had been hitherto held back from an explicit avowal of his interest in Rosabel, by the dread of her being

induced, from her unhappiness at home, or commanded by parental authority, to accept him as a lover before her evident partiality for his society had been matured into a decided preference, and, consequently, into a regard which would not only endure through the first gay and unchequered months of a propitious marriage, but would be found stable in the vicissitudes of life ; and stable, not merely from duty, but from strong attachment. All this he considered the more indispensable, because he was ten years Rosabel's senior ; and he had felt the more apprehensive from the vivacity and impetuosity of her character, and from her ignorance of the world. He had feared that she could scarcely know her own mind ; that she would be taught, perhaps commanded, to think that she loved him, by those who were interested in promoting her marriage.

Influenced by these fears, notwithstanding Rosabel's recently avowed preference, Captain Ashbrook, as he fancied that he saw her resolution waver, became anxious and thoughtful, and intensely apprehensive about the real state of her heart. Before his avowal of his own feelings, he could, with some difficulty, it is



true, have withdrawn from any further pursuit of his wishes, had he been certain that they were disagreeable to Rosabel: but all true attachments increase upon confession, and he felt that now his whole happiness was bound up in the result of this one day's conversation. Rosabel's reluctance to have his offer made known at present, her dread of considering the engagement final, her evident desire to find some means of retreating, if necessary, filled his mind with perplexity, and inspired that most cruel of all uncertainties, the doubt of having a true attachment returned: nor was this feeling dispelled when they parted,—although that parting was, on Rosabel's side, reluctant; and although it was mutually understood, that it was a parting preliminary only to a meeting, when every difficulty would be smoothed, and their union be made indissoluble.

## CHAPTER XXI.

“ *Gon.* I have inly wept,  
 Or should have spoke ere this.  
*Alon.* Let grief and sorrow still embrace his heart  
 That doth not wish you joy.”—TEMPEST.

THE next day was one of departures; Mr. Lermont had fixed upon it for his setting out, and Hubert was to accompany him to the metropolis. Breakfast was ordered at an early hour; and Sir John, who had latterly been from home, made a point of joining his family this morning.

“ Ah! my good sir,” cried Mr. Lermont, holding up the newspaper in his hand, “ I have the start of you this morning; but it is for the last time.”

“—And we shall have those odious politics no more,” said Charlotte, as she seated herself.

“ You ladies think of nothing but caps and bonnets,” cried Hubert; “and that is the reason that you don’t like politics.”

"Drawing men overboard, if their waistcoats are unbuttoned," Hubert enquired Mr. Lermont.

"—A little, sir, please the ladies, after all," observed Lermont.

"Ladies? Ladies!—No!—It is made for the gentlemen," said Hubert; "for my part, if ever I have a use of my ears, the gentlemen shall be first, and take precedence in everything; they shall have the best places. It is no matter, so long after half-a-dozen sisters every day!"

"Would Hubert," said Sir John, "you will not have that trial of your patience long; you will see little enough of your sisters, or of female society in general for these four or five years, I hope."

"No! sir. I hope Mr. Lermont intends putting up at good quarters in London—at the Chapter Coffee-house, I suppose.—None of your Bouverie Streets, or Craven Streets, for me.—I intend planting myself down in the Haymarket or Bond Street."

"Indeed! Hubert, I disapprove of your arrangements in that respect: your brother Phil-

lip would have done better to have avoided those fashionable haunts: I do not wish you to walk in his steps; they will neither suit your expectations, nor my ——” means, Sir John would have added, but the word seemed to overcome him, and he walked to the window.

Hubert received this rebuke in silence, redoubled his attack upon the creature comforts around him, and glanced askance to glean some comfort from Rosabel's eyes. He looked at her with surprise; for her head was bent down, as if with shame or grief, and she returned no responsive glance. Sir John returned to the table: “You will have miserable weather, Mr. Lermont—and, let me see,—Rosabel is to set off to day.—This weather will never do. Rosa, my dear, I hope you will not be very much disappointed, if I say, wait till to-morrow—”

“—Both on your own account, Rosa, and on that of the horses,” said Hubert.

Rosabel tried to look up and smile, but immediately afterwards bent her head forwards, and continued silent.

“—Yet I should be sorry to disappoint you

too, Rosa ; knowing, from your Aunts, that you are so anxious to go."

"The glasses are rising, Sir John," said Mrs. Waldegrave, "and James tells me that this pair of horses is remarkably strong."

"Ah! the horses—that is the great matter," said Hubert—"Rosa is sure to take no harm."

"If it had been Charlotte," observed weak Aunt Alice, "I should say nothing ; because, brother, as you know, Charlotte has never enjoyed but a very poor state of health ; but Rosabel is exceedingly hearty, brother ;—so—"

"Oh! she never catches cold," said Hubert: "I would back one Rosabel against a corps of Charlottes."

"I do not require your advice, Hubert," said Sir John, gravely ; "I will rather leave it to Rosa herself to decide.—She shall follow, in this instance, her own inclination ; I will consult her judgment in preference to yours.—With all her imperfections on her head," he added, smiling, "I do not wish to lose her. Nay, Rosa—there is no occasion for those tears—I am not compelling you, my dear, either to go or stay—you give way too much of late to a

morbid sensibility; let me rather recommend to you the example of your sister, who preserves an equilibrium in her deportment which is highly to be praised."

"Charlotte, sir, is greatly my superior, and I know it," replied Rosabel, with deep humility of manner. "If Charlotte wishes me to stay, I will stay; but if Charlotte wishes me to go—" and her tears fell faster.

"Well," said Hubert, "I always make off when I see a parcel of women crying. Aunt Waldegrave, you're the best, for you have always dry eyes. Come, sir, we shall meet with some of the Finchley heroes, if we are benighted. Good-bye, Aunt Waldegrave; good-bye, Aunt Alice; good-bye, Charlotte, Mrs. Ashbrook that shall be; good-bye, Rosa—I hope some Derbyshire parson may suit you—now don't be writing to me any of your crossed and double-crossed letters, confounded nonsense—I will send you a dispatch next week, if I happen to think of it. Well, sir?"

Mr. Lermont was, however, resolved to know the fate of Rosabel before his departure. "Sir John," thought he, "is leaning towards

her remaining at home, and she and my friend Henry will be happy yet.—I will see Miss Rosabel to her chariot first—if she is to go;—what says Miss Fortescue?”

“ Oh !” replied Charlotte, “ it would be most unbecoming in me to decide, when my aunts are present—would it not, Aunt Waldegrave ?”

“ I will go, if you please, sir,” said Rosabel, in a tone of deep depression ; and she advanced timidly towards her father. Sir John looked kindly at her, and saw that some unusual causes of humiliation and distress were working in the mind of his dejected Rosabel : she was, in fact, sustaining the heavy burden of a wounded spirit, of a mind ill at ease with itself. Naturally averse to concealments, she yet, at this very moment, stood before her father, conscious of concealment from him upon a subject which in those days (ours are times of independance) always rested upon a parental fiat, and upon which no blessing, as she thought, could fall without her father’s approbation. She felt, unjustly indeed, criminal to her sister, towards whom her heart still turned with true, but unrequited, affection. A kind word, or glance, from Charlotte would

have immediately elicited a full confession from Rosabel; but Charlotte had a soul of marble, a heart utterly ossified by selfishness. Rosabel, therefore, prepared to depart. Her attendants were ready, the imperials were packed, through the watchful care of Mrs. Waldegrave, and Mr. Lermont stood at the breakfast parlour door, ready to hand her first to her carriage. Yet Rosabel lingered, in hopes of some kind parting word from Charlotte, and longing to throw herself into her father's arms, and weep out all her troubles there. Charlotte merely coldly kissed her, saying—"Make my duty to my aunt and uncle, if you please." And Sir John rather repressed than encouraged the fond, caressing manner which was natural to Rosabel, and which not all the forms of parental superiority could banish from her artless manners; so in a few minutes she was seated, finally seated, in the chariot; Hubert jumping into his chaise at the same moment, and Mr. Lermont standing on the steps, his grey hair blowing about, and something very like tears apparent in his eyes.

Rosabel sank back in the carriage. The



parting was over. She left her home unmourned, and probably unmissed. No fond regrets, nor tender lingering farewells had made her feel that she was leaving a home of affection, that her absence would impart a moment's gloom to any one, or her return add much to the domestic happiness. Her mother—how would she have felt at this first separation from her daughter? But the thought was too poignant, and poor Rosabel abandoned herself to the most depressing of all impressions, that of being unprized and uncared for by those upon whose opinions and affections we have early been accustomed to place account. “I have no friend but one,” thought she, as she looked round once more and took a last look of Ashbrook. The conviction revived her, and a variety of hopes and feelings followed in its train; many of them more natural than commendable. She began to plume herself upon her expectations. Her father would begin to prize her, when he saw her the chosen companion of a man of acquirement and refinement like Captain Ashbrook: her aunts would find that they had entertained too light an opinion

of her merits. Charlotte would perhaps learn to be fond of her ; but all these, the considerations of an offended spirit, and the fruits of an ill-regulated mind, gave place in their ascendancy in her imagination to the overpowering happiness of being tenderly and exclusively beloved. Possessed, at length, wholly by these reflections, Rosabel journeyed on comparatively in happiness. The sun appeared to her to brighten, and the road to be embellished with new beauties, as her mental atmosphere improved. The novelty of travelling added to the stimulus ; and she looked forth on the varied and now romantic scenes through which she passed with an awakened interest. By degrees, the troubles and the concerns of home appeared less important to her. She saw that there was a world beyond Hales Park ; new ideas arose, and she began to be curious about the concerns, and feelings, and passions, and occupations of others.

It was almost night-fall, before the travellers turned off the high road into a narrow and rutty lane, which led across this part of the country to Southwell, the village where Mr. Evelyn

resided. It was a clear, fine afternoon in March, and the sounds of the sheep bell, and the sight of the rustic shepherd boy, were soon, in that unfrequented region, where then the cotton mill was unknown, the only vestiges of occupation and of social habits. The night had quite closed in, before the carriage, after ascending for some time, entered a straggling village, and Rosabel and her attendant hailed the cottage lights, though few and far between, and heard with satisfaction, the sounds of voices. At length they stopped before a wicket gate, and Rosabel was advised to descend into the rector's garden by a flight of steps; in preference to turning into the stable yard, garnished round with wooden barns, out-houses, and sheds, for the reception of the good man's tithes in kind; the post-boy, who knew the Rectory well, assuring Rosabel that the yard was never too clean, and that, from a late trampling of young creatures—heifers, lambs, and other rustic contributions—it was now almost impassable by foot. Rosabel, therefore, leaving her servant to unpack the luggage, made her way as well as she could round to the

front door, which opened into the garden. She was an unexpected visitor, and in fear and trembling, for it was several years since she had seen her aunt, and her uncle she had never known, she navigated her course with difficulty down a dark passage, until she arrived at the sitting parlour, where the rector and the rector's lady were spending in tranquil tête-a-tête their unbroken evening.



# ROSABEL.



VOL. II.

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# ROSABEL,

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BY THE AUTHORESS OF CONSTANCE.

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VOL. II.

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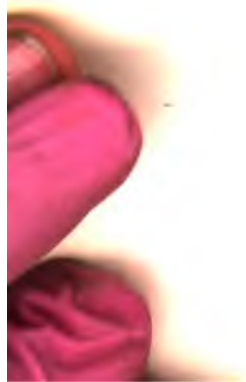
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MDCCCXXXV.





## CHAPTER I.

*“ Val. Now tell me, how do all from whence you came ?*

*Pro. Your friends are well, and have them much commended.”*

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

MR. EVELYN was sitting in a low chair, with a high-railed back, opposite the fire; holding in his hand a screen of turkey feathers, before his shrivelled visage, of a complexion long since hopeless. The old gentleman was thin and small, with regular features, rendered still more formal by the quaint cut of his clerical undress wig; one of those wigs which never even pretend to resemble hair, but looked as if formed of tow: his wig might indeed be said to compose his main characteristic; for his diminutive figure, lost in the magnitude of its support, might easily have escaped observation.

Mrs. Evelyn sat at some little distance from her husband, intent upon her knitting; her work, like every other action of her days,

having some reference to the benefit of others. She annually provided, first her good husband, next his curate, and after them her nieces and nephews downwards—the size diminishing with much exactness—from Charlotte to Howard, with regular sets of under-stockings. Mrs. Evelyn had never been considered good-looking; the difficulty was, in perusing her features, to say which of them was the least exceptionable. The only plain member of a handsome family, she had encountered what would have been to a less amiable and a less occupied mind, a trial, in seeing her sisters the objects of admiration which she could never share. She saw it, however, not only without regret, but with pride and pleasure; was contented to look plain in the dresses which became them, and to be the confidante of their loves and lovers, without one humble hope of conquest herself. Happy in her exemption from all the fruitless anxieties of the admired, or the unnecessary troubles of the enamoured, she considered herself fortunate at thirty to receive her first and last offer of marriage from Mr. Evelyn, then in his fiftieth year; and, for the first time in his life also, entrammelled in the snares of — love, I was going to

say ; but it was not love ; or if it were love, it was, on Mr. Evelyn's side, the love of comfort.

Mr. Evelyn was one of that class of clergymen, who work their way up from low degrees by strict moral conduct, and the deserved reputation of learning and assiduity. He had set out in life as a private tutor, and had sat long enough at the tables of the great, to imbibe a certain courtier-like style of manner, in which somewhat of old-fashioned obsequiousness was mixed with a clerical gravity and formality ; not but that the good man liked a joke over his glass of port wine, but it was usually a joke measured and stale as a county newspaper, or directed, in matrimonial repartee, against his excellent 'Betsey,' as he called her. Yet, though so jocularly disposed—the worthy rector's head was, or had been, the receptacle of much cumbrous learning, and of many puzzling metaphysical questions. In the zenith of his intellectual day, he had written a work on "Resurrection Bodies," so abstruse, that he was rewarded by a certain Bishop with a living ; his patron highly approving of the work—and the more so, that it was impossible for common minds to comprehend it. This event, which had brought good

Mr. Evelyn to Southwell, was still the source of his proudest reflections, and the consolation, for the (otherwise) total oblivion into which the learned treatise had fallen. For few, who once ventured to look into it, ever looked into it again. It was one of those acknowledged good books, which people are always intending to read. Its authorities were endless, and its discussions interminable. It was, as Mrs. Evelyn said, enough to craze her poor head to read a line of it; "how much more so," as she remarked, "to write it!"

But to return to Rosabel—now in all the flutter of a first recognition from "her dear Aunt Evelyn," and of an introduction, as formal as circumstances would permit, to her uncle. She came upon them, as the Rector observed, like a vision; though, he protested, he was not dozing: a habit, in which Betsey, who "always had her own way," would not, he assured Rosabel, indulge him.

"You are grown a great girl," was Mrs. Evelyn's first speech; and her next was, "you wear worsted stockings, I hope?"

"If not," said the old Rector, trying to stand up gallantly, but tottering a little, as if

scarcely awake, "I can lend you some half-dozen pair, knit by Mrs. E."

"Bless me," said Mrs. Evelyn, "what a great girl she is! And now, as in duty bound, how are Aunt Waldegrave and Miss Alice? Miss Alice likely to remain Miss Alice still?—Did you think to tell Adam not to let the post-boy go back without his supper, dear? Then I must ring. And how is Sir John? That was your mother's dog, Rosa—you think him too fat? Well, so he is—Major, poor Major! he is losing his coat poor fellow."

"He is not the only Major now in the parish," said Mr. Evelyn; "he is only one of the invincibles."

"We are raising a corps of volunteers, Rosa; that is what Mr. Evelyn means: you know he is fond of a joke. My love, my dear love, you must have something; there will be a cup of chocolate in one moment: we have it ready to warm, night and day, for Mr. Evelyn. These are sad times—don't your father think so?—all the nation in a military movement. An embargo laid upon every man in the parish—and very right—except Mr. Evelyn, and Mr. Marshall the curate, and old George—you don't re-

member old George, but your brothers would—the clerk. Though old George says he will turn out to fight if necessary, he's by no means young, poor man; he has been Mr. Evelyn's clerk these thirty years, and has dug every grave with his own hands—he is a wonderful man of his years. You must see old George."

"Miss Rosabel must see our troops exercise," said Mr. Evelyn. "I make no doubt but she is partial to the military profession, like other young ladies."

"Mr. Bagshaw, of Hopton, is our colonel," said Mrs. Evelyn.

"—And our apothecary is first lieutenant," interrupted the old Rector, "and Wills, the butcher, the adjutant; so we are all in the killing line."

"They will be reviewed to morrow—you will see *that*, Rosa," added Mrs. Evelyn, "otherwise, we have very little diversion for you here, love. You don't mind about it? No? What a happiness! God bless the dear girl—Mr. Evelyn, she don't mind about diversions—did you ever hear? How well she has been brought up, poor dear."

So chatted the old couple on; and Rosabel,

soothed by their caressing, petting manner ; warmed by the wood fire ; revived by a supper called up upon the shortest notice, yet excellent in every sense, and lulled almost into a dreamy, luxurious stupor, by a beaker of hot elder wine, began to feel and to look happy ; and to blame herself that she had been so unwilling to visit her dear, kind Aunt Evelyn, whose voice and manner, even sometimes her look, brought to her recollection those traces of her mother which still existed in her memory.

On the other hand, Mrs. Evelyn, who, having no children of her own, was not a little proud of her nieces,—nay, even with her real Christian humility, proud, a little proud of their station in society,—wondered, and was all delight, to “see dear Rosa so nimble and tractable ; so much improved in respect to elder people, she was sure her aunts must have brought her up well.” And so the evening passed away ; and the old couple, like those who live in a confined sphere, imagining that the concerns of their narrow circle must be as interesting to Rosabel as to themselves, dilated on the affairs of the parish and the neighbourhood, and chattered to her until nine o’clock ; when prayers were read,



in a faint, mumbling voice, by the Rector; and soon after, the inhabitants of this peaceful region retired to repose.

"I shall be happy here," thought Rosabel, as, on the following day, she descended the narrow oaken staircase of the Rectory, and hastened into the low, but spacious parlour where she had sat the preceding evening. Breakfast was arranged upon a table cloth of Mrs. Evelyn's spinning; but Rosabel partook of the meal alone with her aunt: the worthy Rector never appearing until an hour later; as he took his chocolate in a little half-study, half-dressing room adjoining, whence, about ten o'clock, he peeped out, still in his velvet night-cap and pepper-and-salt wrapping gown, calling out, "Betsy, my madam, Mistress Evelyn:" a summons which drew off the good lady to the mysteries of his toilet, at which she ever presided.

Then, about noon time, when the sun was high, the worthy valetudinarian, provided the wind were westerly, turned out upon a broad gravel walk, which lead to a terrace, flanked, however, by one of those low stone walls common in Derbyshire, between the cranks of which, even at this early period of the year,

tufts of rich polyanthuses grew, and in these, his favourite flowers, the Rector was a virtuoso; whilst along the little border under the wall, grew the sister beauty, the rich, soft auricula.

From the walk thus described—the extremity of the Rector's pleasure garden—the eye looked out upon a view of considerable extent and beauty: variety was there; the ground approximating swelled into hill and dale; whilst the horizon was bounded by hills almost approaching to mountains. But, with this expanse and variety, there was fertility; there were home views of great beauty; for in this part of Derbyshire, cultivation, even then, had given that happy, progressing, peopled look to the scene, the absence of which forms, in my opinion, the grand deficiency by the sea-side, and prevents our coast-scenery from wholly satisfying the mind, which it rather depresses than delights.

Rosabel, accustomed to close, sheltered walks, and to parks and pleasure grounds, enjoyed the free look out from her uncle's garden, and thought she could gaze upon it for ever. This mood lasted even one good half-hour, and she dawdled up and down by Mr. Evelyn's side,

casting a look not wholly divested of risibility upon his quaint-cut figure ; his little shovel hat, and iron-grey spencer, that exploded, economical garment, which gave so much importance to the preservation of chest and arms, and so little to the legs. After admiring the polyanthus, and duly praising the church—a solid, gothic structure, built to defy wind and weather, its chief enemies, the radicals of those elevated regions—Rosabel began to enquire for Aunt Evelyn, and to wonder if she might find her, or follow her down the village. For Aunt Evelyn had crept out, quietly, as to her regular duty, to superintend her large sick family—the blind, the rheumatic, the lame, the consumptive, the infant just born, and the mother who had given birth ; nay, even—tell it not in these anti-charitable days—the sinner, when disease or accident overtook him, shared her attention with the devout and humble worshipper. Nor were the sins of this retired village few and light. Dishonesty, indeed, was scarcely known ; outrage and violence were equally rare ; except a good English black eye, or a broken head—things quite national—the villagers were little inured to vindictive assaults. But there was

an abundance of other misdemeanours—the result of ignorance and idleness—against which the Rector had preached, as he said, for forty years ; nevertheless, his voice being for the last twenty years inaudible beyond the reading desk, except a chance word or two, the poor people went on sinning ; Mrs. Evelyn cautioning, reclaiming, pitying, lamenting, and yet hoping ; for she was the very personification of that tender, old-fashioned sort of charity which St. Paul describeth, but which we must now, as political economists have taught us better things, carefully abjure.

## CHAPTER II.

“ But this point hold, howe’er each sect may brawl,  
 Where pure the life, where free the heart from gall,  
 Whate’er the creed, Heaven looks with love on all.”

RHYMED PLEA FOR TOLERANCE.

I SAID that Rosabel was at first contented to pace up and down the garden-walk, and to look out on the fair scene below. Scarcely a week of her residence at the Rectory had elapsed, before she longed to explore that scene, and intimated to her Aunt Evelyn her hope that she might be permitted to do so. Great was her satisfaction to hear, “ that in Derbyshire, or at least near Southwell, there was neither danger nor impropriety in her walking alone ;” “ and, indeed,” my dear, added Mrs. Evelyn, “ if you do not, you stand a poor chance ; Mr. Evelyn never goes out, except to church on Sundays (Mr. Marshall does all the weekly duty), and you will not like to go my rounds, every day, I think ; besides, my love, the bottled gooseberries are coming on, and my

Susan is but young—they must be buried this year, I think, Mr. Evelyn? the cellar-plan does not do—so, dearest Rosa—excuse me, love, for looking at your dress; this is a tabinet, I remember, of my poor sister's;—you must, if you want a beau, take Major."

"—Had it been *the* Major," said Mr. Evelyn.

"—That would have been better, certainly," resumed Mrs. Evelyn. But, in all our talk, Rose, I have forgot to ask for your neighbour, Captain Ashbrook; is he settling into a discreet, sober man, at last? and has he any thoughts of marrying?"

"Rosabel, who fully intended telling all her affairs to her aunt in due time, was thrown off her guard, and was silent. Luckily, Mr. Marshall, the long-legged curate, who sat writing upon some parish matters at an adjacent table, turned round, and said, "Is that the Captain Ashbrook who has a property at Ellerslie?"

"The same," replied Mrs. Evelyn, "and one of poor Rose's best friends; was he not, dear, once awhile? No wonder, Rosa dear, you blush," she added, in a low tone; "I will never mention his name to you, love, again."

“If that is the same,” said Mr. Marshall, sententiously, his long, thin face looking more ghost-like than ever, and mending a pen at the same time, with provoking coolness and nicety,—“if that is the same, he is well known in this neighbourhood.

“Well known!—how?” thought Rosabel. He had spoken of his sojourns at Ellerslie as rare and transient; and she could not believe that he was so very well known.

Mr. Marshall went on to say—“he was so much occupied, otherwise he should be so happy to shew Miss Rosabel about.”—He nibbed a pen as he spoke—“What time should he, if he could, shew her the walks?” But Mrs. Evelyn had quitted the room, and Rosabel made no reply.

The next day, nevertheless, she began her first essay in walking alone. She took a short round, at first, sallied forth through the village, and made a rapid and timorous excursion to the top of a ridgeway, which commanded the valley of Wirksworth and the heights of Matlock in the distance. She met not a creature, except, as she returned, a neighbouring farmer’s son, with a bundle of hay across his shoulders,

going to fodder some cattle in a remote field. Like the rest of these simple people, he bade her good night, and perhaps lingered somewhat as he touched his hat, in admiration of the unwonted sight of youth and beauty in a station above his own.

Thus passed off Rosabel's first flight. The next day was Sunday ; and it was a busy day at the Parsonage. Sunday-schools were not then in vogue, or, at least, they had not then been established in this Ultima Thule ; so that Rosabel, with all her good-will, was not obliged to hear a column of spelling, acquired, perhaps with tears, on one Sabbath, to be forgotten before the next ; obliterated, most likely, by active, pressing cares ; for, as a neglected, yet incomparable author\*, remarks, ' childhood to the poor, is no childhood,' after a certain period of infancy. The bustle of Mrs. Evelyn's Sunday consisted, first, in the office of getting the Rector ready, and of priming him up for the day's duties. Whilst he could mumble out a sermon, it was his firm resolution never to give up preaching once a

\* See Elia.



day, in spite of Mr. Marshall being the most popular ; a circumstance not so aggravating to the Rector, as to Mrs. Evelyn. He was therefore carefully cooked up, for the weekly occasion ; and appeared in his best wig, which rose into a little eminence of curls on the top, closing around a cavity, like the crater of Vesuvius, in bands of the clearest white, with his dress diamond ring, a present from the bishop's lady, on his fore-finger ; for, like Haydn, who could never compose without wearing his favourite gem, the Rector could never preach so well without this ring as with it ; his ample gown, a thought too long, since he had begun to stoop, well washed with spirits and water, to renew the black ; his bodily frame refreshed with a cup of chocolate and a new-laid egg at the last moment. All this being accomplished, Mr. Evelyn set off, Rosabel and Mrs. Evelyn walking reverently a little behind ; and, amidst an assembling confusion of smock-frocks and red waistcoats, scarlet cloaks, and black silk bonnets, they all entered the solemn edifice.

George, the old sexton and clerk, was already in the desk, whence he descended, from time to time, to regulate the comers-in, place strangers,

correct the inattentive juniors, &c; and whence he ascended before the commencement of each psalm, to the loft, to give out, in that exalted place, the first stave of the melody. It was a melody poured out, or rather roared out, from the powerful throats of butcher and baker, ploughman and tailor, to the notes of their respective instruments, the lesser and the greater violin; and if zeal formed as principal an ingredient in music as it does in devotion, the effect would have been sublime: yet the Southwell choristers gave general satisfaction, and I think with reason; for what is the intention of church music, but to convey the simple, ardent expression of spontaneous devotion?

The sermon, of which Rosabel heard but these words, which were—"we will fight the good fight,"—with reverence be it mentioned—was given out with a vehemence which showed the good rector to be valiant in spirit, at any rate, and aroused to enthusiasm by the state of the country. Being ended, there were so many smiles, and bows, and salutations, between Mrs. Evelyn and the neighbouring families, and so many compliments upon the Rector's good looks, that it was difficult to get away;

— and, as Rosabel observed, there was always some kind office of Mrs. Evelyn's to be acknowledged; for, indeed, her life was one incessant repetition of those humble, useful, unobtrusive services, which it is in the power of almost every Christian to measure out to another, but which it requires a principle beyond mere good-nature to premeditate, and a virtuous perseverance to execute.

Thus passed Sunday, the only day on which a late dinner was prepared at the Rectory; not but that Mr. Evelyn had his due sustenance at one o'clock: some delicate morsel, a sweet-bread or a chicken, provided by his ever-thoughtful wife. But after the second service, it was then the custom to have a good repast for all strangers, or persons residing at a distance, who were asked after service to stay,—nay, sometimes even during the psalms, or at other convenient moments. Hospitality, which is now daily wearing out among us more and more, was then a duty, a part of education, and, next to faith, hope, and charity, in importance; and, among the clergy to their congregation, it seemed, under some circumstances, like a remnant of old monastic times, when the

right-hand of fellowship was not offered empty. In the present day, we have professions instead of solid good offices; and the very object of education in general is to narrow our hearts, to concentrate every exertion to self alone; whilst many popular publications openly foster those selfish principles, in great, and consequently in little matters, which the good sense and good feeling of our ancestors, on these particulars, would have presently discarded. Monday was always a busy day with Mrs. Evelyn, and Rosabel had full liberty to roam about as she pleased. It seemed to her as if she had no right to be idle, where all were so busy; therefore, she undertook, now and then, to carry Mrs. Evelyn's distant messages, and to visit some of her convalescent poor. Wherever she went, in whatever she heard, she found traces of her aunt and uncle's well-judged beneficence, of their systematic and continued guardianship over their parishioners. Often, the offices of charity were of the most arduous kind; for, in the simplicity of their full confidence in Mrs. Evelyn's skill, there was nothing which the poor villagers did not consider her capable of performing in the de-

partment of medicine ; and she was often consulted in matters of life and death, and more than once was asked to set a fractured leg. Rosabel found therefore that being her deputy was no sinecure ; and she began to wonder, first, how her aunt could so quietly and cheerfully perform all these duties ; and, next, what principle, for she found mere feeling would not do it, could carry her aunt on to do so much, and to make so many sacrifices as she must make, in order to relieve the necessities of those around her.

Rosabel had never been accustomed to see others act consistently, though tacitly, upon religious principle until now ; and the conviction to which she now came, that the worthy Rector and his lady must act from this principle, because there were no other motives for their conduct, laid the seeds of that reference to Divine approbation, and reliance on Divine aid, which became her consolation in scenes of subsequent trial. She knew that her uncle was not rich : when he became the incumbent of Southwell, he thought himself happy in the receipt of three hundred a year. He had never expected to require more ; and, compassionating the uncer-

tainties of agricultural labour-  
parishioners were engaged  
not to raise the tithes—on  
although not legally  
circumstances, would  
violate; notwithstanding  
creased to double  
the time of his  
Economy, however,  
tues, an economy  
sense of honour  
nied, nor is  
a liberality  
the old  
economy.  
Evening

humbly, though, as she said, imperfectly, performed her duty in the sphere wherein God had placed her, she should not be left desolate in her old age. Should she survive Mr. Evelyn, which she knew to be probable, He who "fed the ravens" would not leave her without some scanty pittance, nor should she think it any hardship to accept the bounty of good men, and to shelter her declining years in the charity assigned to the widows of the clergy, if it so pleased God. Rosabel, as her aunt once, in confidential discourse, expatiated on this subject, felt her happiness in the prospect which she secretly entertained, heightened by the idea that in her house her aunt would have a home; and the joy of seeing her dear Aunt Evelyn by her own fire-side, appeared to her almost more than human nature could sustain.

Often she tremblingly began a conversation which might lead to the constant subject of her thoughts, but was repelled by Mrs. Evelyn's complete obtuseness upon matrimonial matters. Time, however, passed away tranquilly, if not gaily; and, except a joint letter from Phillis and Amy Warner, and a few scrawled lines from Hubert, Rosabel had, as yet, received no intel-

ligence from home. Phillis, indeed, gave her a succinct account of the Hotham races; of every horse that ran, and every equipage which figured on the race-course: and, after details, which Rosabel's eager eye perused with intense interest, ended with:—"Captain Ashbrook was not there." Amy was somewhat more explicit. Captain Ashbrook's engagements were such that Mr. Goodyer had taken the office of steward for him. A vein of melancholy indifference pervaded the tone of poor Amy's letter. The races were dull, the ball still duller; she had herself sat down half the night, from choice, not caring to be troubled with the conversation of some, who were once favourite partners. Henry was much in the same mood, and could see no beauty in the room—one was too dark, another lady too fair, and "I think he has grown fastidious of late," concluded Amy, with a dash under the words "*of late.*"

Rosabel threw aside the letters in despair. To dissipate her vexation, and to dispel a sort of home-sickness, which, strange to say, began to creep over her, she set out, determined upon a good brisk walk, and on attending, if possi-



ble, the vicinity, at least, of Ellerslie, a hunting box, of which Captain Ashbrook had spoken to her. She wended her way along a winding path which descended into the vale of Alston, crossed a rippling brook, which, after forming a dumble, so called in Derbysbire, among reeds, and osiers, and slight alders, meandered peacefully on, until it merged into a pool, which glittered near a small farm-house, within a few fields of the rustic bridge over which Rosabel had passed.

She was walking rapidly onwards, when the sight of some cattle, in the next field, made her alter her course ; and, with some difficulty, she managed to follow the stream in its devious windings. The geese, which had scattered their white feathers on the meadow, and the distant sounds of the flail, reminded her of Drayfield, and she looked with interest, more melancholy than the nature of the subject seemed to admit of, at the various insignia of the farm-house which the simple, rural scene before her presented. She had now walked nearly two miles, and she longed to know when she could hope to catch the first view of Ellerslie. The farm-house, before which

she now stood, for she had recrossed the stream by a plank, appeared to be carefully closed, and its inhabitants, as she feared, for the most part absent. She knew that they were of respectable character, and she remembered to have heard her aunt speak of them as under some affliction, the nature of which good Mrs. Evelyn had not thought proper to specify; yet Rosabel recollected that, when any delicacy proper for an invalid was brought to table, her aunt carefully cut off a portion of it to be sent to Mary at Alston Farm. These little attentions would have made no particular impression upon Rosabel, for scarcely a day passed without some portion of the homely dinner being sent to one neighbour or another; "a wing of a chicken for a poor man who could fancy nothing else,"—some light pudding for a sick child—a roasted apple, the true "cat's eye," for a man who had a fever—some roast pork for Martha Mellor, who had set her heart upon a spare-rib: these, and other daily offices of neighbourly kindness, were so constantly occurring, that Rosabel would have thought nothing about "poor Mary," whose claim was put in every now and then; but that

Mrs. Evelyn seemed to dress up her case in a sort of mystery. A thousand things were to be said about every other pensioner. The chicken-fancier was hypochondriacal : the sick child had an atrophy : the 'cat's eye' would cure the hot fit of an obstinate ague : and a great deal was said for and against roast pork for Martha Mellor, who had been told by the doctors she might eat any thing she fancied, such was the hopelessness of her case. But poor Mary was only poor Mary, and seemed to have a delicate appetite : "and her parents were not in need." Mrs. Evelyn said, with a sigh : but it was only that "poor Mary" felt pleased with any thing being sent from the Rectory : and Rosabel observed that delicate jellies, preserves, and such condiments, were always the things selected. At length "poor Mary" appeared to be growing worse ; some especially fine old sherry was sent down to Alston Farm, and Mr. Marshall was asked, with a grave look from the old Rector, "had he been to pray by poor Mary ? and, with a meaning glance, *how* was she ?" And, within the last few days, Mr. Marshall had been closeted, after his visits to the farm, with Mrs. Evelyn, and Rosabel saw

her aunt's eyes full of tears after one of these conferences.

Rosabel often talked of walking down to the farm, but had been hitherto put off by her Aunt, with "wait till poor Mary is better; they are in trouble now—Mr. Marshall will say you wished to enquire how she was—her brother was here to-day—she is very ill."

"This, then," thought Rosabel, as she looked at the farm, "is the abode of poor Mary, and what can be the matter with poor Mary?" Without, all appeared peace and prosperity: the house had some semblance even of taste, and much of comfort, about its exterior. It is true, that on a smooth-shaven piece of grass before the house the yew trees stood, a regimental row of cheeses and dumb waiters, and one scraggy creature of a tree attempted a peacock; but this old-fashioned formality was redeemed by a rustic porch, garnished with the woodbine, whose beauties indeed were not as yet, in this early season, called forth into being. It was evident, however, that the sufferer within was very ill; for the white dimity curtains of the principal bedroom window were carefully closed, and the

gallinas and other poultry, in order not to disturb the invalid, had been collected, and penned under nets, at some distance from the house. Rosabel had been assured by her aunt, that a visit to this farm, on her part, would not be acceptable. Mr. Marshall had always turned off the conversation whenever she had asked him any questions about poor Mary. Why was it, that she felt an almost insatiable curiosity, an unwarrantably strong desire to obtrude herself into this house of mourning? Is it that some mysterious instinct, some unaccountable impulse urges us to certain actions upon which the fate of our lives appears in some instances to depend?

Rosabel, however, like the rest of her fellow mortals, assigned to herself a false reason for what her inclinations prompted her to do: she only wanted to enquire the distance from Ellerslie, and that was indispensable; and, stepping quickly across the farm-yard, she knocked gently at the side door. It was slowly opened by a stout, middle-aged woman: who, unlike the generality of persons in that hospitable county, did not invite her to enter. The house-place, or common room

within, looked cleanly and comfortable. A wood fire blazed in the spacious chimney, and before it basked a terrier, the farmer's appropriate dog ; for dogs, like the falconry of old, betray degree ; and there is a decided aristocracy among the canine breed. A goodly row of hams, and a fletcher of bacon, hung in the vast enclosure of the ancient chimney, whilst the large stock-pot, containing, what the farmers' men, in Derbyshire, call their " four o'clock," a sort of secondary dinner, boiled valiantly over the fire. The window-sill was filled with the true cottage plants—the broad-leaved geranium, the myrtle, with its snow-white crests, the careless antirrhinum, the stiff, peculiar, never-growing, goose-tongued aloe—all in pots, polished and clean as the rest of the furniture, and looking as if the hand of care had daily been bestowed upon their culture. But, whilst all within the house betokened comfort and prosperity, yet it was desolate ; and so complete a stillness prevailed, that Rosabel's voice sank to a whisper as she asked, how far it was to Ellerslie ? The woman of the house fell back, as the question was put to her, and the interrogatory was an-

seemed to be a person whom Rosabel had not  
 met or seen, and who had been sitting behind  
 the half-opened door. She was a villager from  
 Southwold, as Rosabel presently discovered,  
 and had just returned, as she said, from Ellers-  
 ley. "It was full a mile and a half further."

"Would not the young lady rest awhile?"  
 the good woman of the house asked, with he-  
 sitating voice. And Rosabel did not decline  
 the proffered kindness: yet she still lingered on  
 the threshold. "Would not the young lady  
 step in, and sit down, and take a little cow-  
 slip wine or so?" was said in a yet kinder  
 accent, although in a manner still between de-  
 pression and sullenness: and Rosabel could not  
 withstand the second invitation. She entered,  
 and sat down: but "hoped she was not obtrud-  
 ing, and that the young person, who, she had  
 heard, was ill, found herself better now."

For a few moments she received no reply.  
 The mother, Mrs. Austin, bustled about the  
 room and was silent: and the question was  
 taken up by the good woman in the red cloak,  
 who said, "She will never be better, ma'am,  
 in this world."

"Is it, then, consumption?" asked Rosabel,  
 timidly.

"No, ma'am; not exactly that, I reckon; she caught cold and will never be better."

The woman paused, and looked up at Mrs. Austin, who, shaking her head, reiterated—"No, never!"

"But what a blessing to be so patient," said the other woman: "and she finds great comfort, doesn't she, in parson Marshall?"

"Is it quite impossible that she can recover?" asked Rosabel, her interest in the poor young woman's fate increasing.

"She doesn't wish to recover," answered the mother, in an accent of such heart-felt despondency, that Rosabel was instantly silenced.

"Perhaps the young lady would like to see Mary?" said the other woman, addressing Mrs. Austin: "you know, Jenny, the doctor said nothing could harm her now."

"No, no—nothing can harm her now," answered the mother, in the same accent of sullen despair.

"Ask her, Jenny," said the villager, soothingly. The lower classes, in country places, especially, think it a matter of courtesy to shew you the sick, or the dying, or dead. Yet the mother still hesitated.



"She's Parson Evelyn's niece, Jenny," said the neighbour, in a low tone, as if to enforce the request.

This argument seemed to be all-powerful ; and, opening a door which led into an inner room, Mrs. Austin said—

"Mary, would you like to see Parson Evelyn's niece, who has come over to enquire after you ; and to send your duty to Mrs. Evelyn ?"

"Yes, mother," was uttered, in a low voice ; and Rosabel was ushered into the bed-room of the invalid.

She felt awkward, and knew not what to say, like persons unaccustomed to illness, and who wish to impart consolation, but know not how. She felt not so much startled at the sight of a person supposed to be arriving at the early termination of her earthly career as she expected to be ; for there was nothing, at the first view of the unhappy patient, to shock, or on a hasty glance scarcely to distress the observer. She was indeed emaciated, beyond the power of any earthly means to restore the wasted frame ever again to the proportions of health ; but the hue of death had not, as yet, settled upon her face, which was clear, and even serene. It

seemed as if Nature had given up the conflict with disease ; and, the struggle being over, that life was gently ebbing away, unruffled by suffering, almost unconsciously.

“ My Aunt Evelyn will be very glad to hear that you are better,” said Rosabel, as she drew near the bed-side, and looked with intense interest at “ poor Mary,” whose name had been so long familiar to her.

The invalid smiled ; and her dark blue eyes rested with a pleased expression upon the youthful and blooming speaker.—What a contrast between them !—How marked and fearful is disease when approximated to health !—Yet, of the two, Mary was apparently scarcely older than her young visitant. “ How awful,” thought Rosabel, “ to be called away so soon !—Is she fit—am I fit to die ?” Yet she did not think death had been so beautiful—could it be death ?

She sat down by Mary’s bed-side ; she could not think that Mary was to die. “ Have you found much consolation in Mr. Marshall’s visits ?” she said.

“ Yes ; they are my only comfort beyond

kind friends," was the reply ; " and she hoped she should see him once again."

" Oh ! but you may recover—at least, I hope so ;" cried Rosabel, in a kind encouraging tone. Mary was silent.

" Do you not wish to recover ?" asked Rosabel : the sight of one so young, and fair, and resigned, or hopeless, she knew not which, bringing tears into her eyes. " You wish, surely, to get well ?"

" No."

Rosabel could say no more ; all her stock of consolation was at an end. She could have held out hopes to the sanguine ; but, to one so irretrievably and avowedly abandoned to her fate, there was nothing to be said.

She thought, for a time, on what point she should next touch ; and a deep silence reigned for some time in the little apartment.

" I do not see," Rosabel again began, " why you should despair ; such wonderful recoveries do happen, and—"

" I do not despair," answered the invalid,—now. She looked, as she spoke, at a small Bible which lay on a little table near her.

“ You are young,” resumed Rosabel, after a pause.—“ Aunt Evelyn, I know, thinks that young persons recover the soonest.—What is your complaint ?”

A blush passed across the wan face of the sufferer. “ I cannot explain it to you,” she replied,—“ and—do not ask my mother.”

“ I am wrong,” said Rosabel, rising hastily, “ to perplex you with questions. I will see you, if I may, again. Forgive me—I fear I have fatigued you. I have been little accustomed to illness; but do not therefore think me unfeeling, Mary. It will do me good to visit you, Mary; for I am young, and have been thoughtless on these matters. Farewell !” She cast a lingering look on the invalid; and, as she left the room, her heart was moved with the tenderest compassion for her, whom she was never to see again. The solitude, but perhaps not repose, in which she left her, her perfect consciousness of her own state, and the unfeigned, though less interesting grief of her mother, affected Rosabel sensibly. She turned again to look at the gentle being whose days were numbered by the decree of Providence. “ Alas !” thought Rosabel; and she again looked at her—“ there can be no

hope." Her fair hand so attenuated; the lip so white; the eye so sunk and hollow!—She met the gaze of that soft and pensive eye; and, suddenly, it seemed to lose its softness, and to blaze with momentary excitement; yet, immediately afterwards, a sweet but transitory smile played upon the lips of the sufferer. It was a last look.

Rosabel, as she bade good evening to the afflicted mother, wept, as if she had been privileged by relationship to mourn. She proffered her assistance in any way, to soothe poor Mary's last days. Money was obviously not wanting; but "should she come and read to her? she knew her aunt would not disapprove of it, and—"

"Mary will want nothing—long," was the disconsolate mother's reply; and Rosabel found herself again in the farm-yard. She had given up her walk to Ellerslie for that day,—it was too late; and, accompanied by the red-mantled villager, who was to protect her through the field of cows, she set off for home. Rachel, her companion, was a gaunt woman, upwards of forty years of age, with a shrewd, hard countenance, a sallow and pitted face, and a deep masculine

voice. She was a sort of oracle in Southwell, where education was in those days, and perhaps is in these, rare; and, as it is often the case in politer circles, gained much of her ascendancy, not only from her being superior to others, but from her thinking herself so; for there was a confidence in her deportment, "which was half the battle." Rachel was quite a character, and "spoke out," as the phrase is; and so, after marching victoriously through a collection of young bullocks and wild-looking cows, and surmounting a style, Rachel began—

"It is a sad story, Miss!"

"What is a sad story?" said Rosabel.

"Mary Austin—her misfortune," returned Rachel. "Surely, you know about that, Miss?"

"No! how should I? Pray tell me," cried Rosabel, all curiosity, and drawing nearer her companion as she spoke. "I knew there was something strange in her story.—Poor Mary!"

"Nay," said Rachel, "it's nothing so very strange, in this country neither, except that her parents were, like old fools, blind. It was for two years that he pursued her, daundering about here from Ellerslie, with his gun and his

dog, and watching the poor cretur in and out. But what are ye stopping me for, Miss?"

"From Ellerslie? what had it to do with Ellerslie?" cried Rosabel, her colour rushing violently into her face.

"A great deal, if you'll bide awhile." And they sent her over to Bakewell, to be out of the way—up in the Moors; and they sent her here and sent her there; but it would not do—no—and it could not do, for her heart was set upon him.

"I wish," said Rosabel, speaking very hurriedly, "you would tell me who this wicked man from Ellerslie was."

"So, at last, it turned out as every one expected; and her mother was well nigh distracted, her father would'nt see her, and young Ashbrook would'nt do nothing for her. —Sure she must be soft," said Rachel to herself, as Rosabel, with a determined grasp, arrested her progress, and looked her in the face as if she were deranged.

"What did you say? Whose name did you speak?" cried Rosabel, in a voice almost of phrenzy. "Don't tell me such a tale—it is false—I do not believe it."

"Then all the country does," said Rachel, composedly. "There's not a boy at Ellerslie but can count the times Mr. Ashbrook was seen coming across the fields to Alston. Ask—nay, don't ask the poor girl herself, for that would be cruel—but ask Mrs. Evelyn. Mr. Ashbrook is not much known hereabouts, it is true, except for this thing. He never mixed with the gentry about, and his visits were but short. He did not like Ellerslie. They say, he's a captain now."

"I shall ask Aunt Evelyn," said Rosabel, haughtily. "She never saw Captain Ashbrook; she does not know him, it is true; but she will know all about it, if there be any truth in this story, which I do not believe."

She walked on, in indignant silence, for some time; and winded slowly up the ascent, the beauties of the scene, which had before delighted her so much, all unmarked by her, and her face crimsoned with the flush of passion. It soon, however, faded into an ashy, unwonted paleness, as conviction, by degrees, wrought upon her.

"Tell me," she said, after a long silence, to Rachel, who still kept her undaunted air,



“tell me, what sort of a looking man was this Captain Ashbrook, dark or light, short or tall?” Her voice, usually so sweet and low, was raised to an unnatural pitch of harshness, and there was a look of defiance in her air as she turned round to Rachel, and uttered this question.

“I never saw him but once,” replied Rachel, sullenly ; and they walked on. After crossing a field or two, being an arrant gossip, she chose, however, to begin again.—“He is dark—a very pleasant gentlemen to speak to—not out of the way tall.” She glanced at Rosabel, and saw that her disdain, her doubt, was yielding to some writhing, agonizing conviction. “It’s Captain Ashbrook, of Ellerslie, ma’am,” she ended, with composure.

Rosabel made no reply : — the trees, the hedges, the fields, seemed to be receding from her, and every step she took to be planted in the air. By degrees this vertigo, or whatever it may be called, went off, and she was able to hear the rest of Rachel’s story.

“He got her away, somewhere in London ; and the poor thing was pensioned off, deserted, and—and was a mother and not a mother, for the babe died, before any of her friends knew

of her fate. And it was said, that in them wicked lodging houses they put her in a damp bed, and there's where the mischief lays."

"Happy," said Rosabel, with a deep-drawn sigh, "had she died then!"

"Howsomever, it went to her brain, and long was she beside herself; and all her talk was about Alston Farm, and all her asking was for her mother.—Poor Mary! I remember her a pretty lass."

"And *was* he the destroyer?" said Rosabel, holding her hand to her forehead.—"No, no, I cannot believe it."

"Ask Mr. Marshall," returned Rachel, almost tauntingly, for she could not brook being doubted. "Ask Parson Evelyn, or the lady."

"Do not advise me," cried Rosabel, impetuously—"I shall ask no one—and never, never, when I have once reached the Rectory, let me see your face again."

"—But tell me, finish your false tale—finish," she added, in a voice so petulant, yet so full of wretchedness, that Rachel, stern as she was, almost trembled at her violence.

"She was long what they call a maniac," continued Rachel; "but I vex you, young lady,

don't fret so,—there's no help now. I am glad," thought she to herself, "to see them tears fall, for she's almost as mad as poor Mary was." Impelled by the genius of gossip, Rachel, however, pursued her narrative. "And her mother did take on so, and the father too; but he said, if ever his Mary was herself again, he would not care for her disgrace; but the worse to sorrow after the thing was her brother John."

"Poor creature!—poor John!" said Rosabel, sobbing.

"She was restored, but has never looked up again; and the doctor says 'tis a waste, a kind of a decay. She has had a power of doctor's stuff; and Captain Ashbrook, it was only last week, sent word down to Alston to have every thing done for her that could be—for he's sorry now."

"Only last week!" screamed Rosabel. "Oh, God!—oh, God!"

"She's mad! poor thing!" thought Rachel; "but what's the use of taking on so, for a poor castaway, like that Miss? You had better not go through the village, I suppose; walk up them steps and open that gate, and you'll get into the Rectory presently."

## CHAPTER III.

“A man keeps a friend’s secret better than his own. A woman keeps her own secret, but blabs that of others.”

LA BEUYERE.

“I CANNOT think,” said Mrs. Evelyn to the Rector, as they sat in the evening in the accustomed parlour—“I cannot think what ails Rosa,—she’s sickening for some disease surely—the dear child has overwalked herself. She has lain on the bed since sun-set, and her head is burning. I have recommended her a posset, but she will touch nothing; and when I went near her, she clung round my neck and wet my shoulder with her tears.”

“She’s her mother’s own child,” said Mr. Evelyn.

“Susan,” said Mrs. Evelyn, hurriedly, to the servant, “see if Miss Rosa cannot be over-persuaded to take something, and say, whenever Mr. Evelyn is a-bed, I will come to her. I

wonder what she *ought* to take," she added, musingly.

"To take advice, perhaps," mumbled out the Rector.

"You don't think Mr. Evelyn, surely, there's any thing between Mr. Marshall and her—girls do take such fancies—she has never been in spirits since he was here the other day."

"You're a strange hand," Betsy.

"No child could be blither than she has been till the day before yesterday: the very life of the house. It is past nine o'clock, Mr. Evelyn," said Mrs. Evelyn, evidently impatient; and she rang the bell for prayers. The simple performances of that sacred duty being over, Mrs. Evelyn hastened to Rosabel's apartment. She found her niece more composed; but it was the composure which comes after an overpowering excitement. Naturally inclined to confide, yet, from incessant rebuffs, little accustomed to do so, Rosabel could not, on the present occasion, bring herself to avow to her aunt the misdirected attachment in which she had indulged, and which she now loathed. "No," thought she, "my secret shall die with me: expose him I never will. Without advice have I rushed into

this engagement, I need no one to counsel me to break it off." Such was her resolution ; and by the pure in heart I shall be believed when I say, that the least part of her sorrow proceeded from the mode in which her own destiny was affected by the discovery. *That* was an after consideration ; at present, grief for the victim of Captain Ashbrook's delinquency was mingled with that disgust to a crime of this character, which a pure and principled woman feels at every period of her life ; but, in the first dawns of youth, before the sad experience which time too surely brings along with it had rendered such intelligence less startling, though never less repulsive, the disclosure was aggravated by the novelty, and imparted a degree of horror and unhappiness which appeared to Rosabel to take away all value from life—to render all hopes of meeting with honour and purity in the other sex visionary—to shake her confidence in the masculine character in every relation of social existence—and to render all thoughts of marriage, however remote, repugnant to the last degree.

Rosabel felt, as perhaps it would be well for society that women should always feel on such

points; nor were her feelings stronger, I am convinced, than those of any unsophisticated girl would have been. To hear women speak lightly on such subjects, to find them palliating such sins by the excuse of their frequency—to wring from them an acknowledgment that they would take no cognizance of them, upon the plea of all mankind being in such respects alike—inspires a disgust approaching to that with which we regard blasphemy, or that modification of it which exists under the name of profaneness. Women who thus estimate the characteristics of the other sex can have very little of that virtue which the libertine Sterne recommends, self-reverence, and still less of maternal, conjugal, or sisterly feeling, if they can bear,—can bring themselves calmly to consider, such moral degradation as the inevitable fate of man.

Brought up in innocence, or in ignorance of evil (they mean the same thing in the young and naturally high-minded), Rosabel's sufferings were indeed intense. At first, for many hours, she was almost incapable of recurring to her own situation with regard to Captain Ashbrook. Then running over all the circumstances—the

most cruel, cutting doubts of his actual, real, regard for her arose. Was he not an intriguer, a seducer? Of what avail or value was his love? She shuddered almost at the idea of being the object of such a passion.

By degrees the poignant sufferings of jealousy succeeded other feelings. Did love, such as she had herself felt, really exist in Captain Ashbrook's mind? No—it was not such as hers. She had been devoted to him—every wish, every hope had centered in him. But he had divided the empire of his heart with another;—one, all too lovely, though inferior in rank; the same fond looks, and words, and allusions which had been lavished upon her, had been bestowed upon another—equally, perhaps more, fondly.—Oh! cruel thought, and still more cruel that Rosabel felt herself degraded by caring for such love; a love so selfish in its proceedings as his had been, so degrading to woman; so unworthy of all she had conceived of Captain Ashbrook.

Heart-sick and hopeless, utterly hopeless, Rosabel could not bring herself, this night, to impart to her aunt Evelyn all her misery. She even tried to veil it; owned she was not well—she was tired—and, weeping in the fond embrace



of this her second mother, she acknowledged merely that she had seen poor Mary, and that her story and her appearance had shocked her very, very much indeed.

“Ah! poor Mary!” answered Mrs. Evelyn. “It is a wonder that she lasts so long. It is indeed a sad story: and that Captain Ashbrook is a very, very wicked man.”

How strange it is, that when we cordially join in the reprehension bestowed upon a once cherished object, it yet grates upon our feelings as harsh and unwarrantable, even whilst we acknowledge its justice.

Rosabel withdrew her arms, which had encircled Mrs Evelyn’s neck, and said, mournfully, “he must be, indeed—do you believe it all, Aunt?”

“Most assuredly, my Rosa, darling. I know every word of her story to be true—and never, never, Rosa dear, have any thing to say to that Captain Ashbrook, nor consider yourself honoured, love, whatever his rank may be (for I am told he is like to be my lord some day), by addresses from him, love: though I am happy to think it not probable, you being so much of a child, Rosa.”

“ Ah ! Rosa,” she added, after a pause, which Rosabel’s deep sighs alone broke—“ ah ! Rosa, your uncle has preached against this sort of thing forty years, to very little purpose. But it is to be endured when a poor humble couple forget themselves ; and I have seen the most creditable wives and mothers conduct themselves as if they never had had a misfortune, for all that : but when gentlemen of Captain Ashbrook’s station, who could marry any body, forget themselves so, and use their influence to betray a poor girl to her ruin—for it’s every thing to her, but nothing to them—it is lamentable indeed.”

“ It is, indeed, aunt.”

“ But, love, why should you grieve ? there are plenty of good men in the world, thank God, Rosa ; your uncle Evelyn, for instance, dear, so very much above all that : and yet he had his college temptations, no doubt ; but he fears God, Rosa, and knows that his eye is ever upon us.”

“ How awful,” said Rosabel, shuddering.

“ No, love,” I do not exactly say that. He is not extreme to mark—he sees the sin, but sees the temptation also ; sees, love, too, the struggle to resist temptation. I should be glad

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“Most assuredly, my Rosa, darling. I know every word of her story to be true—and never, never, Rosa dear, have any thing to say that Captain Ashbrook, nor consider him dishonoured, love, whatever his name may be, for I am told he is like to be a great man. I have addresses from him, and he writes to this

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to hear that Captain Ashbrook were reformed, and well married and settled. So farewell to this subject. Good night. You will have some gruel, dear? and if not well in the night, slip on your dressing gown and come across the lobby to me. Try to sleep, love."

She went, and Rosabel was left in darkness. "Try to sleep!" It was the first time almost, in her life, that Rosabel had ever had occasion to try to sleep. The great difficulty with her, after ten o'clock, in general, was to keep awake. But now she felt that trying was of no use, and she lay unable to find an easy position, and fruitlessly turning, whilst her too active thoughts busied themselves in forming an hundred resolutions. She would immediately write to Captain Ashbrook and break it off. She would tell him that his character was unveiled to her—that poor Mary's woes should be avenged. No! she would manage her refusal otherwise—a cold, silent dismissal would be more dignified. How could she tell him that she was acquainted with such a story as *that*? If his own conscience did not upbraid him, her reproaches could be of very little avail.

Sometimes she wished she had a light, and

could get up and indict a letter to him at once. But a letter would bring an answer, and an answer from him she should loathe. She should put it then entirely upon the matter of inclination; her mind had not wholly been made up to accept him—it was now altered—how would that do? But that excuse would be a falsehood; and Rosabel was no adept at falsehoods.

She would never see him again; she would persuade her Aunt Evelyn to send her somewhere or other, where she never more might meet with him. Her tears fell fast at this alternative. Never to see him again? How desolate was her future existence to be! What a grave of hope, of joy, of youth, and health, would that final separation be! Her heart then softened to him. Perhaps he was penitent—perhaps he really loved her now:—but he must be punished—retribution must overtake him. She would see him once more—bid him a kindly farewell—entreat him, if he had ever borne her one true, foud sentiment, to retrieve his errors—and, in another world, though not in this, they might then, perhaps, meet again.

Suppose that should not be their fate—suppose that he still defy the vengeance of Heaven, that the God of Justice cut him off in his sins!—Awful, overwhelming reflection! “And I,” thought Rosabel, “to have attached myself, to have pledged my whole happiness upon so lost, so miserable a being!—a being whom I cannot respect, or whose acceptance with God I cannot hope for! No; for me there is no comfort.”

She sank upon her pillow, and lay immovable, the silence around her adding to the appalling character of her thoughts. The wind was high, and it whistled through the old tenement, and blew about the elm trees with a mournful and hollow gust. The church clock had successively sounded one, two, three, and Rosabel, overcome by feelings which, mercifully, often terminate in a deep sleep, was sinking into repose, when the loud twanging of the church bell aroused her. It was the minute bell—solemn, and, as nearly as possible, at measured intervals, such as is tolled at funerals. The wind carried the sound along with it, as it were, and redoubled its effect. Rosabel’s heart sickened with terror; for she knew, from hearsay, that it must be the passing

bell, still rung, I believe, in many country places, and certainly in Derbyshire, at the moment, or as nearly as possible, when the soul of the dying is passing into eternity. This ancient custom, a relic of Catholic superstition, is peculiarly affecting, in villages where every member of the community is distinctly known, and seems to claim for the departing spirit the good wishes and prayers of all who hear it. To Rosabel it was an unaccustomed sound ; and she arose, awe-struck and trembling, and hastened down the lobby to her aunt. There was a little movement in the house, and a light passed quickly across the garden. Rosabel shook from head to foot. "Aunt, dear Aunt, come to me," she cried : "I am ill ; and, oh ! whose passing bell is that ?"

"It is only poor Mary's," said Mrs. Evelyn. "Her poor frame is worn out at last.—By this time she is gone," she added, as the bell gave its last peal. "She is at rest. Rosa, love, go to bed ; you feel things too strongly, darling. Susan shall sleep with you."



## CHAPTER IV.

“ The miserable have no other medicine,  
But only hope.”

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

MARY was dead: her suffering spirit was, at last, at rest: Captain Ashbrook's victim was at peace. To Rosabel it now remained to act, and to endure. For a few days her spirit was incapable of repose. She wandered up and down the terrace walk, or sought the more complete repose of the fields. Nature was breaking forth into vernal loveliness; but she saw not, or, if she saw, scarcely remarked, the tints which every successive sunny day, and even hour, called forth. The air refreshed her no longer; exercise had ceased to invigorate her—nature to delight; yet still it was only in incessant movement that she found the burden of her thoughts even tolerable.

One day, as she stood upon the heights, her

eyes fixed, as if spell-bound, upon the blue smoke which arose above Alston Farm, just visible from this point, a moving procession, winding over the undulating surface of the intervening meadows, caught her eye. It was a funereal train, a coffin, covered with a white pall, borne on the shoulders of men, whilst a small party of mourners walked, in accordance with the customs of the country, after the deceased. In general, a long stream of relatives and friends were assembled to follow to the grave any member of their peculiar community, any individual of that circle which, to the humble as well as to the great, constitutes their "world." But here, it was merely a handful of mourners, probably only the immediate relations of the deceased, who slowly, and with heads bent towards the earth, tracked their way along the winding paths which lead from Alston Farm to Southwell church.

Rosabel felt her chest tightened and oppressed, and the pulsations of her heart seemed arrested. The hopeless misery of the two last days had not hitherto vented itself in tears. She had wished to weep; but nature refused her that solace. It seemed almost like a relief to

her, to see, even at a distance, others as wretched as herself. Perhaps, of all the mourners, there was none who had so much cause to grieve as she had : they might recover to enjoyment, and find their consolation in other ties ; but she—she could not draw the parallel ; she could only feel—she was unable to reflect.

Suddenly, a voice behind her, pronouncing her name, startled her. It was Mr. Marshall, the curate, who was watching the funeral procession, that he might repair, in good time, to the church-yard, to receive into that peaceful enclosure the last remains, thus welcomed to their resting place, as it were, with the offices of religion.

Mr. Marshall's manner was dry and measured, and did little justice to his feelings, which, though not endowed with any overflowing sensibility, were kind and well-regulated. He was concerned, upon looking for some moments at Rosabel, to observe the pallidness of her face, and the harassed wildness of her look. After a few moments of meditation, he concluded that, unaccustomed to scenes and tales of distress, her young and tender heart was touched with the sad history of poor Mary's sorrows,

which was now the universal theme at Southwell. This was the only cause which he could assign for the deep melancholy of poor Rosabel's air; and, after some reflection, he determined to speak to her on the subject.

"I am glad to observe, Miss Fortescue," he said, in a measured tone, "that you are duly impressed with the seriousness of this occasion."

Rosabel was silent; her eyes still sought the little procession.

"We may say, with Peter and James, 'it is good for us to be here.'"

"*I do not think so,*" replied Rosabel, dejectedly, the long wished-for tears rushing unbidden into her eyes.

"Ah, Miss Rosabel, you are young; and I am, to be sure, somewhat older; and now we look upon this little pageant as if it had little or no reference to us. But let us," he added, natural good feeling and real piety getting the better of his artificial varnish of sententious wisdom, — "let us reflect that not a single incident of this kind passes before us without being directed by an especial Providence for our individual good."

Rosabel made no reply, and looked down.

“ You sorrow, Miss Rosabel, almost as one who has no hope. True, her sins were many, and hers was the burden of a wounded spirit. She was amongst the transgressors. You, who have a watchful parent, and have been carefully bred up, are apt to think, perhaps, more strongly upon the point of this poor girl’s errors, than I, who know the weakness and ignorance of those of less gentle blood than yours. She was the victim of a most depraved and artful man !

“ You shudder, Miss Rosabel. See, the funeral is winding up the hill. There is Jarman Austin, her father. Poor man ! terribly was he cast down, Miss Rosa, the last night that I hastened down to read the prayers for the dying to Mary. Your own father never was prouder of his child, than this poor man of his daughter. He hung over her as though he would have snatched her from the tomb ; but disease was too strong for us : she was fast sinking when I reached the Farm.

“ —The bell is beginning,” continued the Curate, pulling out his watch.—“ I had just closed my book, Miss Rosa. The last words I read to her were these :—‘ And now I go to my

Father, and to your Father—to my God, and to your God.’ She smiled—sweetly smiled. I saw that the soul was about to depart—for the regions where I hope it will be received among the blessed. I repeated the solemn words I have uttered to you ; again she smiled, and, without a struggle, expired.”

Rosabel covered her face with her hands.

“ But I distress you ; and my time is come and see, Mrs. Evelyn has sent for you, to meet the corpse, no doubt, in the church-yard. It will be considered a compliment to the departed, and to the survivors ; and will be more than usually acceptable in this present case. And sure, exalted as is your station, and pure your heart, Miss Rosa, you will not demean yourself by complying with custom, and paying this tribute to the dead.”

“ I demean myself ! what poor wretch can be lower than I am ?” thought Rosabel—“ I, who have placed my affections upon such an object, is it for me to despise poor Mary’s memory ?” And, wrapt in these thoughts, she followed her aunt to the church-yard ; Mrs. Evelyn saying, apologetically, as she went—

“ You see, my dear, it has always been the

custom of the family at the Rectory to attend, when any of the principal parishioners are interred; and in this case," she added, wiping away a tear, "I should be loth to omit it. It has been our way, after the ceremony, to have the father, mother, and chief mourners, in to refreshment; but *that* you need not be troubled with, dear Rosa."

I like, I must say, the little bustle which accompanies the last offices for the dead, in country places. In great towns, unheeded, and almost jostled on its path, the funeral of the poor man passes onward to its destination; and even the passing attention with which that of the rich man is regarded, proceeds from no kindly fellowship; but, in more limited spheres, frequently as the bond of society is disturbed in life by petty jealousies and calumnies, death cancels every grievance.

Mary had been the theme of detraction and the object of envy, and many a village rival had at once imitated and condemned her. But now, the slanderer and the friend alike crowded to the church-yard, to sorrow over her remains, and to pay her, too late, the tribute of compassion. At the gate, the procession, halting, was

met by the Curate ; and those solemn words, " I am the resurrection and the life," were heard, in deep silence, by the young and old. The child, who came by its mother's side simply to see the show, reined in its little thoughts, and, looking in her face, saw that she was sad, and, in its infantile manner, was sad also. The stern farming man stopped, as he passed by with a bundle of hay across his shoulders ; and even the " natural," as they call it in Derbyshire—a sort of half-enlightened idiot, of which there is generally a specimen in every hamlet of these hilly districts—sat upon a grave-stone, mute, poor wretch ! from instinct or imitation.

Rosabel had never heard, or read, or thought about the funeral service : its unparalleled pathos, its solemn compilation of passages, at once awful and consolatory, its admirable adaptation for the dead, and to the living,—the indefinite middle course which, with wisdom and delicacy, it takes between a mass for the departed and an admonition to the survivors,—all these beauties, though severally unmarked by her, had their effect—as often, doubtless, unconsciously they have—in elevating and composing her spirits ; and in impressing her mind



with an idea, novel to her :—" of what moment are our passing sorrows and disappointments, if, at the last, we can hope to be numbered among the dead in the Lord, in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection ?"

Mr. Evelyn had long since ceased to perform the duty on these occasions ; but he came into the church-yard by a small wicket entrance, and stood, among poor Mary's mourners, by the grave. The appointed passages from Scripture were read in the church, and a composure at once decorous and mournful reigned among the family of the deceased. Rosabel wondered at her calmness, and at theirs. She remembered that, where there is no consciousness of sin, our anguish can be borne ; and her mind reverted in agony to the seducer, the destroyer. " He will feel it," she said, to herself—" the time must come."

As this idea passed across her, the village choristers, still retaining the ancient practice, struck up an anthem, which, rude as was its execution, went to the hearts of the untutored listeners. Then the coffin was again carried into the church-yard, and placed by the grave, whilst those affecting, consolatory words, " man

that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery," introduced, as it were, when the last separation is about to take place, to add consolation to consolation, to point out the trials of existence, to say, virtually, "here she is at rest; on earth was no abiding place for her"—those words of hope and tenderness were read. Rosabel now found that she could weep. The flood-gates of sorrow were opened; her heart was softened, not torn, by her grief; and sympathy with others—that natural balm to our unruly and acrid passions—subdued, yet sustained her. What was her despair now to that of the bereaved father?

The mother bore the parting best. She was a stout and inflexible person; and the duties of her daily existence, perhaps, had kept her from reflection. The father, though more evidently heart-stricken, bore up too, manfully, and stood firm, looking on, as if to say, "lamentations are now unavailing; whilst there was any hope, I watched and mourned: but my Mary is gone—our sorrows must cease."

Poor Mary's career was closed; nothing could call her back. "She had no need of tears." But all present were touched by the

burst of grief which was uttered by the brother, whose behaviour during the whole service had been comparatively tranquil. In him the emotions of youth were not yet blunted, as in his mother, by the every-day occurrences of an active life, or modified, as in his father, by a sterling, though simple, philosophy.

The sister and brother had loved each other most fondly; and her errors and her injuries had (accuse me not, too rigid moralist) cemented those fraternal ties. At first, when John had beheld his sister disgraced and dishonoured, he had sullenly resented, not her wanderings, but her temptations. He had moped rather than sorrowed—shunned all social converse—ceased every collision with the village throng—no longer engaged in the Christmas carousals, nor joined the cricket players on the green.

But, when Mary came to her home, broken-hearted, sick, penitent, and humbled to the dust, John had been her fondest attendant, her best nurse, her solace and treasure. For her he again took up his gun, to supply her failing appetite with those delicacies which were now required to sustain Nature—for her

he had relinquished all amusements, and even occupations, which could take him from home—for her he had restrained all expressions of indignation against him, whom he could not name—and whom he prayed never to see.

The last benediction was over—over poor Mary's remains rose the mound of new earth, quickly and indifferently heaped up by the assistants. The father, the mother, and even John, had slowly withdrawn into the Rectory; and all the little crowd had dispersed to their homes. Yet Rosabel still lingered. Mr. Marshall had taken off his surplice, and old George, the clerk, closed and locked the inner door of the porch. The hollow sounds of the closing door aroused Rosabel from her reverie. She took a last look at Mary's grave; and, as she turned away, uttered to herself—"Mary, your cause will be avenged; for let him marry whom he will, he never, never can be happy."

## CHAPTER V.

" I pray thee cease thy counsel,  
Which falls into mine ears as profitless  
As water in a sieve ; give not me counsel,  
Nor let no comforter delight mine ear,  
But such a one whose wrongs do suit with mine."

SHAKSPEARE.

A MESSENGER from Hales Hall, and a packet for Miss Rosabel, were the first sounds which greeted Rosabel, as she entered the breakfast parlour on the following morning. The dispatch was handed in ; it contained intelligence, perhaps, not altogether unexpected by her to whom it was addressed. Captain Ashbrook had returned home ; and, too impatient to protract his declaration any longer, he had made a formal tender of his hand to Rosabel, through her father ; by whom the letter to Rosabel was written. The intelligence was conveyed in a few words, and accompanied by Sir John's commands to return home immediately with the bearer of the summons.

There was also a short epistle from Mrs.

Waldegrave to Mrs. Evelyn, explaining that Sir John wished Rosabel to leave Southwell; though why, Mrs. Waldegrave could not exactly say, as her brother had not expressed his reasons.

This letter was interlarded with many stiff, set compliments, for which no new word can excel that applied to such expletives, the expression of the worthy Mr. Burchell in the Vicar of Wakefield.

Rosabel, therefore, prepared to depart; yet, in the near prospect of leaving her dearest earthly friend, Mrs. Evelyn, she could not accomplish that disclosure which she had so often contemplated, and which she felt was due to her aunt's maternal kindness. How should she avow her attachment to such a man?—to one so justly despised and reviled at Southwell?—When it was all over, when her engagement should be finally set aside, then would she tell her aunt; but not till then.

Unconscious of the cause of Rosabel's depression, and knowing that she was far from happy at home, Mrs. Evelyn employed the intervening hours between Rosabel's departure, chiefly in endeavouring to reconcile her

to the thralldom which she suspected Rosabel still found so grievous. It was like a fond mother reconciling, or striving to reconcile, her child to return to school ; whilst every admonition, and every injunction to be happy, if she could, ended with—" but remember, Rosa dear, if you are not comfortable, you have always a home here ; your uncle is vastly fond of you, and if you can put up with a poor house, Rosa, there is always a corner for you at Southwell."

How different too was her departure from Southwell, to that from home ! Even the old Rector emerged an hour sooner from his learned closet, to take his last breakfast with his niece. The servants were all in activity, and Mr. Marshall just stepped in to say good-bye, but would not stay, lest he should interrupt last words. Not so, old Friend, the faithful dog, a venerable character in his way, who had a trick, or instinct, of always coming into the parlour when people were setting off upon a journey ; he, not being troubled with any delicacy, staid to the last, and saw Miss Rosabel to her carriage, and then returned tranquilly to his kennel.

At length, enveloped in warm shawls, muffatees, and comfortables, and laden with cold provisions, warm lozenges, loves, and compliments, Rosabel found herself able to get into the carriage. Her uncle solemnly blessed her as she left him, saying, as he laid his hands upon her head—"may the blessing of God rest upon you." Her aunt would not be seen to weep, lest she should 'set poor Rosa off,' but retired behind a door as the carriage drove away.

Rosabel reached home without any accident, although with some delays. At the last post-town, where her family was well known, she was greeted with the intelligence that Captain Ashbrook had been waiting there some hours, in hopes of meeting with her; having, as the landlady supposed, some message from Sir John. At last, he had given her up, and supposed that she would not set out that day. "But, Miss," added the good lady, "I cannot take upon me to say that you look as well as you did when you went: you're cold, surely; the horses will be ready soon—step into this warm parlour. I hope there's no bad news at the Hall? How long has the Captain been gone, John?"



“Not ten minutes,” was the reply from one of those heterogeneous creatures, the half-boots, half-waiter, that one sees in country inns.”

“Thank God!” thought Rosabel, as she again drove off, “I have escaped that meeting;—what can I, what shall I say to my father?—Shall I tell him the truth?—No; that I cannot do—had mama been alive, I might have told her.—Shall I beg Aunt Waldegrave to tell him?—Oh, no, no, no!—I cannot betray him to any one—let the secret die with me.—Aunt Waldegrave!—Oh, how she would triumph and revile! Could I bear that his name, however I may think of it myself, should be branded by others?”—Pursuing thus the train of bitter reflections, Rosabel, with a shudder, heard the park-gate of Hales Hall close after the chaise; for, though it was now dark, she well knew every turn which the carriage took. It stopped; and, trembling and heart-sick, she entered the Hall. No one was there to greet her, except little Howard, whose first words were—“Rosa, how pale you look!”—but a servant informed her, that when she was refreshed, and had taken off her travelling dress, it was Sir John’s

wish that she should have her tea with him in the library.

"Is he alone?" asked Rosabel, in a tone so unusual to her, that the servant looked at her, surprised.

"I believe he is, Miss Rosa, now."

"Oh, that I could avoid this!—that I had any one to speak for me—any one friend," said Rosabel to herself, as in an agony of distress she threw herself into a chair in her own apartment. She hardly dared to look round. The last time she was there, she had been busily packing up: and, oh! what prospects of life had then opened upon her. "If I had but told Aunt Evelyn all, and begged her to settle every thing with papa.—Oh! that I had not come home!—never, never—but it is too late now. I had no one to advise me."—"My dear aunt is so ignorant of all these things; she would have expected me to have hated him directly, and to have got the better of my attachment entirely at once; and I cannot do that. I only do hope that Captain Ashbrook will never know that I am acquainted with his wickedness—it is too horrible!—let

him never know that the veil is torn from my eyes."

Racked by contending feelings, and terrified beyond measure by the prospect of an interview with her father upon such an occasion—an occasion upon which, I believe, few young ladies can bear to confer with a father—Rosabel, after a summons, which she knew to be imperative, descended to the library. She had hoped, and her wishes were, in this instance, gratified—not to be tried by the sight of Mrs. Waldegrave, or of Aunt Alice, or even of her sister. Charlotte was spending a few days from home, and the two elderly ladies had been expressly requested by Sir John not to disturb Rosabel this evening.

She found her father alone, as she expected: his manner, as he received her without rising, was grave, but affectionate. He kissed her with more than wonted fondness, saying—"when you have had tea, Rosabel, or supper, if you prefer it, I wish to have some conversation with you. How are your aunt and uncle? I am glad to hear, from Mrs. Evelyn's letters, that your conduct was such as they

considered dutiful and proper.—Sit down—do not hurry.”

“ Some conversation !”—What can be more awful ?—Those words which usually preface volumes of good advice, or those equally worrying things, family accounts.

“ Will you not take something more ?—Very well.—I do not think Southwell has agreed with you, Rosabel ; you are thinner than when you left home. But that is little to the purpose. You were apprized, by my letter, of the cause which induced me to send for you home ?”

“ I conclude that this application, on the part of Captain Ashbrook, has been made with your consent ?—Do not be frightened, Rosa—I wish, on this occasion, to be a substitute, if possible, for the mother whom it has been your heavy misfortune to lose. We neither of us ever wished to controul the inclinations of our children in respect to matrimonial connections, otherwise than to prevent their forming debasing or imprudent marriages.”

“ I leave you, Rosa, entirely to follow the bent of your inclinations in this matter,” continued Sir John ; smiling slightly, for he thought that

he could well rely upon the inclinations of his daughter taking the directions agreeable to his own wishes. He scarcely, from that delicacy which men of refinement understood so well, looked at his daughter, knowing how sensitively alive to every impression his guileless Rosabel ever was.

He waited, for some moments, in hope of a reply.

"I had no idea," Sir John resumed, after a pause, and with an encouraging smile—"I had no idea, until lately, Rosa, that *you* were the object of Captain Ashbrook's preference. I was led to suppose it had been your sister: yet, loving you both equally, Rosa, I am, perhaps, better pleased that it should be so. Charlotte is, perhaps, best adapted for home; and you—you must learn, Rosabel, how to conduct yourself properly in a new situation. I am, on the whole, pleased that it is so."

"My dearest papa,"—was all that Rosabel could utter.

"Rosa, my dear, why those tears?—Come hither, 'child—confide in me—throw yourself upon your father's love, Rosa," said Sir John, tenderly kissing her, as she threw her arms

round his neck, and hid her face upon his shoulder. "Upon my word, Rosa, one would conjecture that it were a marriage scheme to be broken off, rather than one meeting with the full and pleased consent of a father, who wishes for nothing but to see his children virtuously happy."

"Then, never let me marry *him*," answered Rosabel, passionately; "for I never could be happy—I never could either love or respect him—" she was going to add, but, afraid of leading to a disclosure, the words died away upon her lips.

She resumed, more composedly, and in a manner still more determined:—

"You will do me the greatest favour, dearest papa, if you will not ask me to think of marrying Captain Ashbrook—she gasped for breath—if you will allow me to put an end to the whole affair; and if you will be so good as to tell him, that I never wish to see him again." She ended; and, sitting down, buried her face in her handkerchief, and wept and sobbed with the vehemence of youth—of youth, vehement alike in its sorrows and in its pleasures.

Sir John looked extremely grave; but he

was not a man to reply to passion in its own language ; and, moved as he was, by Rosabel's agony, he repressed the tear and sigh to which parental love gave birth, and he might, perhaps, to common observers, have been deemed phlegmatic upon this occasion.

" I am very sorry," Rosabel said, with great humility, " to be the cause of disappointment ; and the more, papa, that I have given you nothing but trouble all my life."

" Very well, Rosa ; be it so. You are not singular in that respect ; others have done the same," answered her father, coldly ; for he could not help conceiving that some feminine caprice, some fancied difficulty, actuated his child on this occasion. " There is no reason to fret about it, then, Rosabel ; the thing is decided."

He took up his pen and began to write ; and Rosabel again saw in her father the stern and dreaded parent, to whom her heart could never be opened, and towards whom all her yearnings of tender love must be repressed.

" If you have quite settled this rejection in your own mind," Sir John resumed, after he had allowed Rosabel's tears fairly to subside

into a gentle calm, "if this be the result of reflection, Rosabel, and of a strict examination of your own heart, I will not only never urge you to think upon the matter myself, but I will put your decision in such a decided form to Captain Ashbrook, that you shall be annoyed with no farther solicitations from him. At the same time," he added, austere, "I shall, be assured, oppose your following your own wayward inclinations—for they are wayward, Rosabel, that I see—in respect to any connection that I may deem derogatory to my family, and disadvantageous to the future interests of your younger brothers and sisters."

He spoke somewhat imperiously, and, rising, began to seal some letters; as much as to say, "the affair is done with now, and I do not wish for any further conversation on the subject."

"Good night, Rosabel," he said, after a pause, extending his hand to her. "Go to bed; you are tired, and want rest—good night, my love," he added, in a milder voice, as he caught a glimpse of Rosabel's pallid and wretched face, whilst she hastened from the room.



## CHAPTER VI.

“ Oh Heaven! were man  
 But constant, he were perfect :—that one error  
 Fills him with faults.”

WINTER'S TALE.

SIR JOHN kept his word. He put Rosabel's determination into so decided a form, that no ray of hope would have remained to the rejected suitor, had he not been buoyed up by the recollections of Rosabel's unguarded indications of affection, and by the avowal of her own lips. His steps were bound towards Hales Hall, when he met a messenger with a letter in his hand. He opened it ; and, to save further explanation, we will give the contents.

“ Dear Sir,

Last night I had some conversation with my daughter Rosabel, on the subject of the preference with which you have honoured

her, and the proposals which you made to myself, on her account. Since I have ever made it a rule not to controul the inclinations of my children in respect to matrimonial connections, I have the painful task of informing you, that all hopes of the honour of a connection between the two families are destroyed by my daughter's own inclinations. She avers, and I regret it, I assure you, that she cannot consent to any encouragement to your addresses being permitted ; and this determination has been submitted by her to me, with so much decision, that I have promised her that her inclinations shall not, in the present case, meet with any violence from me. Regretting, deeply, this resolution on the part of my daughter, and with sentiments of esteem and respect, I have the honour to remain, dear sir,

Your faithful servant,

JOHN FORTESCUE."

"This must be some stratagem, some diabolical scheme of Mrs. Waldegrave's," was Captain Ashbrook's first idea. His next impulse was to walk off sturdily to the Hall, pacing along the pathway with a vehemence indicative of

wounded pride and passion; for he was one whom worldly cares had, as yet, touched not; and a temper, at once generous and irritable, had, hitherto, displayed the former quality only, for circumstances had not conspired to rouse the latter. He approached, therefore, the Hall with a gait more than usually erect, a complexion more than usually glowing, and advanced immediately to the library, where Sir John sat. Yet, as he entered the room, hopes and fears, upon which the happiness of his future life seemed to hang, subdued his naturally high spirit. The colour faded from his face, and the young, and brave, and fortunate, and accomplished soldier stood in the presence of Sir John, pale and humble, as the unhappy cause of his disappointment had been on the preceding evening.

Sir John rose formally, and gravely extended his hand. There was not a ray of hope to be discerned in his countenance, as he said—

“ Captain Ashbrook, I hope you are aware that I could not help this. I hope you are aware that I cannot controul the inclinations of my daughter.—But I will not insult you so much as to suppose you could wish.—”

"No," replied Captain Ashbrook, with a deep-drawn sigh,—“that, indeed, were wholly out of the question. If your daughter, if Rosabel,—but excuse me, Sir John,” he added, impatiently turning away towards the window,—“allow me to say—I cannot understand her conduct, I cannot explain—in other words, if I may not be permitted to hope, if I am to despair—if I am to be discarded,” he added, with a bitter smile, “let me be convinced,—let me hear her determination from her own lips.”

“Oh! certainly; but allow me, Captain Ashbrook, to say, that I have promised Rosabel she shall be distressed by no solicitations, either on your part, or on mine. Time might do much for her—and certain acquaintance, and indeed intimacies, into which I have unguardedly permitted her to run, may in time be set aside—and foolish predilections be overcome. My recommendation would be to wait with patience; to take her present denial; and to trust to circumstances to make that impression upon her heart, which I have no doubt would eventually occur.”

“You are very good,” replied Captain Ash-

brook, somewhat haughtily, "to give me the benefit of your advice. I feel honoured by your good wishes for my success; but I am ill calculated for the course which you recommend; patience is not one of my virtues. I wish to know my fate at once; if adverse, I shall learn how to bear it."

Sir John, in his turn, looked grave and a little displeased. "Rosabel will, in that case," he said, calmly, "be disposed, I presume, to settle your mind upon the subject." He rang the bell. "Tell Miss Rosabel Fortescue that I wish her to come here immediately.—Of course, Captain Ashbrook, this interview will take place in my presence. If any hesitation on my daughter's part should appear, you will avail yourself, if you choose it, of a private conversation, and enquiry into her motives." Captain Ashbrook bowed, and a silence of some duration ensued. Sir John sat immovable, his eyes sternly fixed upon the fire. Captain Ashbrook sat, also immovably, but listened with intense apprehensiveness for the coming step of Rosabel. A door was closed and a step heard; it turned away, it was not hers: a cheerful voice was heard in the lobby; that surely could

not be hers—no, it was Howard's; she came not; and the heart of the young and ardent lover sank within him, at this confirmation of his worst fears.

Sir John again rose, and again rang the bell impatiently. A second message was sent, so imperative, that, in those days of filial subjection, it could not be disputed. A pause more agitating than the first ensued; at length a door was heard gently closing—then a soft, slow, unwilling step; then a low tap at the door—it was Rosabel.

It seemed cruel thus to force her into collision with what she evidently so much dreaded. Captain Ashbrook had been angry—and not without a cause—he had felt himself slighted, cast off, tantalized, and perhaps deceived; yet, as he raised his eyes to the face upon which they had been often fondly riveted, and as for an instant he met hers, every supposed injury was forgotten. He longed to rush forward and claim her as his own Rosabel, who could never thus mean to torture him; but his fond, reproachful glance was unrepaid; and there was something in her mien and manner which threw him at a distance, that even in the earliest

hours of their acquaintance he had never experienced before.

"Rosabel," said Sir John, "you are come to answer for yourself. In my younger days a father's reply would have been sufficient: Captain Ashbrook judges differently; and I think, Rosabel, from what you have yourself let drop, that you have given such encouragement to Captain Ashbrook's hopes, that you are bound to unfold the reason of your not fulfilling those expectations."

He spoke in measured phrase.—Ah! how easy is it so to do when the heart is but slightly interested; but his speech, though well concocted, failed for some moments to elicit a reply.

"Speak, Rosabel," said her father; "Captain Ashbrook wishes to urge no suit that is unpleasant to you. He has honoured you with the highest proof of his respect and esteem that a man can bestow, and you are bound to say whether you cannot repay those feelings with reciprocal feelings, and whether—"

"I cannot return those feelings with reciprocal feelings," Rosabel broke forth hastily, interrupting her father, as if anxious at once to

decide the subject—as if, indeed, that decision came, as perhaps at that moment it did, directly from the workings of her own heart.

She would have turned away for the door, but, as she changed her position, her eye rested for an instant upon the countenance of Captain Ashbrook; it was impossible not to be disarmed by the wounded affection, the deep mortification, the overwhelming distress which marked that countenance. Rosabel stood for an instant irresolute: the scene would, at this crisis, have made a not indifferent picture. The complicated feelings of the astounded and perhaps indignant lover; in the prime of age and maturity of mental vigour, when every sentiment was perfected and ennobled by some degree of experience and reflection: the youth of the other party; Rosabel—her girlish tresses, in this her ordinary attire, scarcely gathered up under the bodkin or comb; the innocence of girlhood still characterizing the pervading expression of her delicate, though not strictly symmetrical features; whilst the passions with which our maturer years are blessed, or cursed, cast but a fleeting influence upon the changes of a countenance so varying and flexible, that scarcely



was traced one sentiment in the beaming glance of a face thus "brightly mutable," when it was quickly chased by another.

Half way in intensity of feeling between his daughter and Captain Ashbrook, was Sir John; his fine and reflective countenance lighted up with an affectionate earnestness, when turned for an instant towards his daughter, and perhaps expressive the more from the slight infirmity of the baronet; an infirmity which, when it does not exist in any great degree, gives, in my opinion, a peculiar interest to the person so affected, softens the harsh and powerful-minded man by an innate sense of dependence upon others, and bestows upon the humble and gentle an additional claim to our attention and assistance. But to return to our subject.

A silence followed this first exposition of Rosabel's feelings. Captain Ashbrook, confounded no less than humiliated, would have thought that he did not hear aright, had not his mind reverted to the hesitation which Rosabel had displayed upon his avowal of his attachment; her dislike to an explicit proposal to her father; and her dejection and vacillation altogether upon that occasion. A few mo-

ments of bitter reflection shewed him, as he thought, her feelings all in their true light; it was evident either that she did not know her own mind, or that some other predilection interfered with any progress which he could hope to make in her affections.

The silence was, therefore, broken by his rising to depart. Rosabel started when she saw him draw his military cloak round him.

Sir John then spoke. "Rosa, my love, have you well considered this matter? Pause, before you reject, and reject for ever, an offer which I had fondly hoped would have decided your destiny for life. Think, Rosabel, of what you relinquish."

"Oh! Sir John," cried Captain Ashbrook, impatiently, "why urge, why distress your daughter? I see—, I know—, I am satisfied. I have fondly and foolishly indulged in hopes which—which I shall learn in time to relinquish without regret. He spoke proudly and even coldly; for it is the strongest affections which turn, when unrequited, to bitterness. Yet still he lingered, and again he looked for one short moment at Rosabel.

"For that I am truly grieved," said Sir John;

“I am truly grieved, Captain Ashbrook, that such hopes should have been thoughtlessly held out to you, and I blame Rosabel for it severely. Her youth, her reckless, and, I am sorry to add, wayward, disposition must plead her excuse.”

“Rosabel, you have been much to blame, since you have wantonly destroyed the —”

“Only let me entreat that you will not blame her,” said Captain Ashbrook, earnestly,—“that you will rather blame me, who have presumed too far. Our affections are not in our own power,” he added, with much agitation, and, turning hastily away, he again prepared to leave the room.

“Rosabel,” said Sir John, sternly, for he heard not the whole of Captain Ashbrook’s speech, yet saw the distress of mind in which it was uttered—“Rosabel, once more answer me. Is this a childish trick, a piece of girlish romantic subterfuge, or is it, as you assured me, the deliberate resolution of your judgment and affections? I insist upon an instant and candid reply.” He rose as he spoke, and, turning to Rosabel, his firm and imperative manner acted in a manner contrary to its usual influence, and roused her innate though dormant courage.

"I wish for all engagements between me and Captain Ashbrook to cease," was her firm and audible reply.

"Of that I am already convinced," said Captain Ashbrook, in a tone equally firm and audible; yet his voice softened and his countenance expressed a real despondency, as he added, "Sir John, why press this matter farther? I mean not to crave, I assure you, for a measure of reluctant favour, for an affection of duty. Happier far as I am—wedded to my sword," he continued, laying his hand upon the hilt of a slender weapon which, in conformity with a custom not then abolished, he still wore. "Do not blame your daughter. It is well for me that I am thus undeceived before my happiness is irrevocably entangled." And, bowing to Sir John, without another look at Rosabel, who stood mute, statue-like, her inmost feelings betrayed only by the working of her hands, the heavings of her bosom—without awaiting for any chance of a reply, or glimpse of future relenting kindness—the disappointed lover hastened from the room.

## CHAPTER VII.

*Ferd.* Here's my hand."

*Mira.* And mine with my heart in't."

TRUMPET.

SOME months elapsed, after this conversation, without the occurrence of any particular incident. Summer was far advanced, and Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice had recovered from the uncomfortable state of conjecture which they were in, as to the reasons of Sir John's hasty summons of Rosabel home; Captain Ashbrook's long interview with Sir John; Rosabel's participation in that interview; and many other little particulars which it were tedious to mention. Few of her relations had marked the change in Rosabel herself, and not even her father had seen all that she had suffered since her return home. Had her mother been alive, she would have confided her sorrows and been relieved; but her father, whilst he loved her, was distressed, by his chilling, and more than

ever chilling, manner, all explanation of her seemingly strange conduct. Rosabel saw that he was very angry with her ; and, whilst she pined under the unmerited condemnation, she could not bear to unfold circumstances which, whilst they justified her decision, would cover Captain Ashbrook with obloquy. For a while, the virtuous indignation which a well-principled female mind ever feels at crimes such as his, sustained her, and kept up the horror which she felt at ever receiving addresses of love from him. Sometimes, indeed, doubts passed across her, whether she might not have been deceived : could it indeed be true ? Yet, had she not seen the victim ; had she not heard the heart-rending particulars ? The facts were, alas ! undoubted. She shuddered when she remembered how narrow had been her escape from an union with selfish libertinism, and justly felt that any lot were preferable to that. Yet, whilst she blamed, why was it that she pitied him too ? Why was it that his name still riveted her attention ; that his health, his prospects, his occupations, to which frequent allusions were made, still interested her more than any other passing conversation ? She felt

humbled when she reflected that it was so; she almost hated herself that she could not adequately hate him; that the remembrance of his last reproachful look, the tones of his voice when she had last heard him speak, at once indignant and desponding, still again and again recurred in her moments of solitude; and many were these moments. Harassed by these contending feelings, and fearful that any one in whom she might confide might blame her for not being able to controul them, Rosabel tracked the scenes of her comparatively happy infancy disconsolate. Her health was naturally too strong to be materially affected by sorrow as yet; nevertheless, her indifferent and languid air, her slow and deviating pace, might, had there been any one interested in observing her, have marked her out as, what she really was, the ghost of the once joyous Rosabel—Rosabel without her animal spirits—without her laugh—without the elasticity and hope of youth.

Her father was changed to her:—she met his altered eye almost without a pang; for it seemed to inflict but a small portion of her misery. May, glorious May, came, and passed away, and the brightness of all around her gladdened

her not. Her sorrows would have been insupportable, had not one consolation, unknown to her till then, gradually asserted its influence over her mind, and raised it from the dust.

An all-directing and pervading Providence, by whose decree she was thus chastened, had been of late much in her thoughts. Never had she reflected upon religious matters, until she went to Southwell. It is impossible for the youthful mind to be wholly without impulses of occasional devotion, unless it be habitually hardened or grossly ignorant. Religion, as a principle, must, however, be taught; and in Rosabel it had never been inculcated but as a form. She had even regarded its observances as a task; her prayer had been uttered mechanically, the Scriptures perused as a duty, systematically, so much and no more, and willingly exchanged for a play-book, or for light and frivolous conversation. If she had borne her early wrongs with any degree of submission, it was for her father's sake, and not because her aims took a higher direction. But now, her humbled and dejected spirit was fain to rest itself upon some anchor of comfort. She was



the stricken deer, whom every hope had abandoned, save one ; and she knew and felt, that, whilst her conduct was condemned by her father, as capricious and even dishonourable, and secretly blamed, no doubt, by Captain Ashbrook, to Him who sees in secret it was justified, as the result of an innocent though erring heart. By Mrs. Evelyn she had been first taught, both by means of precept and practice, to know, that if we seek the aid of Divine grace, we shall not seek it in vain. Even the simple and illiterate Mary had sought and felt its influence ; and Rosabel remembered, with heart-thrilling emotion, the comfort which religious dependance had bestowed upon the latter hours of the poor penitent. By degrees (for it was no sudden inspiration of the quickening spirit, no rapturous and fallacious call, but the slow effect of secret reasonings with her own mind, prompted by the merciful goodness of the God of all consolation) Rosabel began, habitually, to refer every event to His will ; to learn the duty of submission, the fruitlessness of murmuring ; to see that the events of her life were chalked out by a higher power than by the unruly " wills

and affections of sinful men,"—and she experienced, for the first time in her life, the balm of religious comfort.

It was whilst her mind was thus gradually trained to better things than her early dispositions indicated, that an event occurred in the family. Charlotte, who had been, of late, much from home, had received an offer of marriage. The condition of the proposing party was in every way suitable. He was young, and had a good estate, was of an irreproachable character, not very good-looking, but pronounced by Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice to be, what they considered, a "very proper kind of young man." Charlotte, who had never testified much partiality for any one, who had tried to attract Captain Ashbrook at Mrs. Waldegrave's mandate, and shaken off one or two young fox-hunters at her aunt's bidding, now fell in love by particular desire of Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice; authorized Mr. Spooner to apply to Sir John; was properly hysterical on the occasion, and actually deviated so far from her usual frigidity as to enfold Rosabel once more with sisterly affection in her arms.

“Rosa, why do you not rejoice? You turn your head away.—I fear you are displeased at your sister’s good fortune,” was Mrs. Waldegrave’s pleasing observation.

“I always thought you would be so glad,” said Charlotte.

“And it is so natural that Charlotte should be married first,” observed Aunt Alice.

“We shall only be twelve miles off,” added Charlotte.

“It is so fair that the eldest should be married first,” reiterated weak Aunt Alice.

“I am sorry,” remarked Mrs. Waldegrave, condescendingly, “that Captain Ashbrook should have gone away without indicating his intentions; that is doubtless the why and wherefore of Rosa’s sad looks.—One or other of you young ladies he certainly ought to have proposed for.—”

“Oh! it will come about,” cried Charlotte, with more than usual animation. “He is to return to Ashbrook, before he goes abroad.—My Lady Lovaine tells me so. Mr. Spooner is very intimate with him, Rosa; and as people will talk of the future sometimes (won’t they,

Aunt Waldegrave?)—we were talking yesterday of who were the proper county set to visit. We mean to begin as we end ; and, I assure you, Captain Ashbrook has a high place in Mr. Spooner's esteem."

"I am very glad to hear it, my dear," returned Mrs. Waldegrave. "It would be a great feather in Rosa's cap, should Captain Ashbrook ever honour her with his preference ; and I do not despair, when once you, my love, are fairly out of the way."

## CHAPTER VIII.

“ 'Tis better to be lowly born,  
 And range with humble livers in content,  
 Than to be perk'd up in a glistening grief,  
 And wear a golden sorrow.”

SHAKSPARE.

CAPTAIN ASHBROOK had studiously avoided showing any degree of pique, or manifesting any hostility towards Sir John Fortescue or Rosabel. It is true, that his visits at Hales Hall were discontinued, and that he refused invitations when asked expressly to meet Sir John and his family; but he evinced a desire still to maintain a friendly understanding with these, his nearest neighbours, whilst it was, at the same time, evident that he did not intend to renew any intimacy. Reports prevailed that he was making preparations to join his regiment, from which he had had leave of absence. At one time it was said that he was absolutely gone; but he re-appeared, and it was understood that his military movements were deferred

until the autumn. Lord and Lady Lovaine were in London ; and Rosabel found that her rejection of their relative and heir continued to be a secret from the rest of the county gossips, and seemed, indeed, to be fairly forgotten by every one, except herself.

Meanwhile, she had a pleasing and yet anxious duty to perform, which tended to draw her thoughts, in some measure, from her vexations. Martha, the kind and faithful nurse of her tender age, having been pensioned off as no longer required, had retired to her native village of Ashbrook, within a mile and a half of Hales Hall, and about half a mile from Captain Ashbrook's residence. To none of her subsequent charges had Martha attached herself with the same fondness as to Rosabel. There are some characters peculiarly qualified to gain the affections of those beneath them ; and Rosabel was one of these. Her virtues were all of a kind which they could comprehend, and her faults of a nature which they could forgive, and even palliate. Imprudent, careless, and generous persons are likely to be the favourites of servants, and of others of limited education and contracted views ; for by them prudence and

economy are confounded with meanness and cunning. Martha could never thoroughly attach herself to the Warner interests: Miss Warner was too good and too wise for her; Miss Amy too “*yea—nay;*” Mr. Henry was not to be compared to Master Hubert, whose very wildness and unmanageableness obtained for him the dangerous appellation of a boy of spirit. But Martha’s health was now declining, and she sent for dear Miss Rosabel to come and see her, just to have some one to whom she could talk of her aches and pains; and Rosabel was certain to obey the summons.

It was some years since they had met; for Martha had been visiting nieces and grand nieces, and had only just settled down at Ashbrook. Her cottage was comfortable; and Rosabel recognized sundry little gifts of her own, and of her brothers and sisters, to their former nurse: some wretched landscapes of her own, which had been thought by Martha and herself very superior, as juvenile performances, and which were now framed and glazed, and hung up round the apartment. Then there was a large old-fashioned broach, kept in an ivory box, one of those oval broaches

with a mother-of-pearl ground ; this contained the hair of all the family united, in one little circlet of small pearls, and comprised locks of every tint, from the fair tresses of Charlotte, to the rich chesnut of Rosabel ; and this relic, which had been the united present of the whole family, upon Martha's leaving them, was still shown to comers in, with no small degree of that pride which valued and attached servants feel in the very bond of servitude.

“ So, Martha, you are at home at last,” said Rosabel, looking round with complacency ; “ I suppose you will expect me to come to see you very often. Have you had any visitors from the Hill ? ”

“ No ; but Miss Warner has sent me a warm cloak, and master—Mr. Warner, I mean—a pair of blankets. Miss Amy talks of coming ; —but I have had Captain Ashbrook here already.”

“ Indeed ! ” said Rosabel ; “ I suppose he will consider you, although Mr. Warner does pay your rent for you, as one of his tenants.” The allusion brought up certain recollections, and the unimportant speech was followed by a sigh.



“ Do folks say you are looking well, Miss Rosa ?”

“ I really do not know what they say, nor even care,” answered Rosabel. “ Are you able to go to church, Martha ?”

“ Ah, no !—but it’s almost as good as a sermon to hear Captain Ashbrook talk—how that religion, and the ways of Providence, was such a comfort in affliction, and so forth ; it was like a written book.”

“ He talk of the comforts of religion !” cried Rosabel ; “ he—what can he know about it ? a young, thoughtless man like him,” she added, checking herself and assuming a calm tone.

“ But it’s not only talk, with him ; the house-keeper has furnished my cupboard, by his good pleasure,” replied Martha, opening a three-cornered cupboard, on the shelves of which stood a goodly array of cups and saucers ; “ and has stocked me with the best of linens too—sure enough, I am in luck’s way.”

“ I am very glad of it,” answered Rosabel, a little softened. “ Unhappily, Martha, I who love you, perhaps best of all, can do but little for you. Had my poor mother been alive, it

would have been otherwise—I could have influenced *her*, you know, Martha ; as it is, perhaps, since Charlotte is going to be married, I may, probably, after all, be at the head of my father's house, some time or other, Martha."

" So I was saying to Captain Ashbrook, Miss Rosa."

" To Captain Ashbrook!—and how came you to mention my name to him, Martha?" asked Rosabel, her face flushing with displeasure.

" Oh! I was only shewing him that there broach, and he found out which of them locks was your hair directly. And, says I, Miss Rosabel will be Miss Fortescue soon now; that is, if she don't marry."

" Well?" said Rosabel, angry with herself for wishing to hear any more.

" Oh! he made no words upon the matter at all, Miss Rosa, but got up and looked out at the door; and I just then made bold to say, that I hoped Sir John would not let you throw yourself away; whereupon he just said 'no, he hoped he would not,' and with that he was off across the road in a minute."

“ I am very much obliged to him, indeed,” exclaimed Rosabel, indignantly ; “ there is not the least occasion for any anxiety upon the subject. I am old enough, Martha, to be left to my own discretion,” she added, in the same high key ; yet some thought coming across her, this forced and assumed dignity suddenly gave way ; and, as she finished the speech, she burst into tears.

Martha looked at her, concerned, but not surprised. “ This is the way you always was in, Miss Rosa dear, from a baby—high spirited one moment, and low spirited the next.”

“ High-spirited I never am now,” said Rosabel, in vain endeavouring to check the flow of grief thus unwittingly called into play. “ Never, never—but what matters it ?—nobody notices, nobody cares what I do, or what becomes of me, Martha,” she added, passionately ; and then, as if ashamed of this ebullition of grief to a person so far beneath her in rank and education, she added, “ farewell, Martha, farewell ; I am late, do not detain me ;” and she hastened to her horse, on which she had ridden to Ashbrook, and quickly disappeared.

The old woman stood at the cottage door, and looked wistfully after the young, and lovely, and unhappy being, whom she had danced, a happy infant, in her arms, and whose joyousness and over-indulged playfulness were still fresh in her partial nurse's memory.

"She has got into some scrape now," thought the old nurse, as she ruminated over the whole of the conversation; "she has been unlucky from the cradle." And many a conjecture, in her solitary moments, did this well-meant visit of Rosabel's occasion to Martha.

Of course, it was mentioned to Captain Ashbrook, on his next call; for Martha, to use her own language, could put "two and two together," and could see that her benefactor's attentions to her had their source in the recollection which she inspired of Rosabel's flight from home, and of Martha's maternal care of her upon that occasion. All the villagers wondered at the remarkable respect which was paid to the new-comer; for Captain Ashbrook was usually reserved, although kind, to his dependants. Martha, who, like old spoiled servants, was forward in her speech and manner, and overflowing with curiosity, burned to see

Rosabel and Captain Ashbrook brought into contact with each other. One afternoon, she had in vain expected Rosabel ; the shades of evening drew on, and Martha had quite given her up, when the sound of horses' feet renewed her hopes. She was overjoyed when, on going to the door, she saw her young lady, because she was sure that Captain Ashbrook would look in that evening.

" Well, Martha ?" cried Rosabel, " I cannot stay a moment ; next week Charlotte's wedding is to be, and to-night Hubert comes home ; to-morrow, Phillip—and we are exceedingly busy at the Hall."

" And happy too ?" asked Martha, peering cunningly at her young friend. " Happy too, I fancy ?"

" Happy !—oh, yes ! I suppose so ; or we are to be happy, when the wedding is all over—I hate weddings."

" So it should seem," said Martha, dryly. " And how is the bride to be dressed ? In my lady's best point, cleaned up and trigged up new ? or in what new furbelows?—and who's to be there ?"

" Oh ! as to dress, I believe it is all settled

long ago. Charlotte is to be, as you say, in lace ; I am to have something white, inferior, of course, but I dare say very handsome, because Mr. Spooner chose it ; he has been up to London on purpose. I'll come again in a day or two, but to-night I must go, Martha dear—see ! it is twilight nearly, and absolutely a star or two.”

“ The road, being a lane, is very safe,” answered Martha, looking about her. “ ’Tis not like the high-road, with them trampers.—So, the butler told me yesterday as Lord and Lady Lovaine’s coming down from London o’purpose for the wedding.”

“ So I heard,” replied Rosabel, looking down, mournfully ;—“ it will be a very gay wedding.”

“ And there will be a ball, won’t there ?—And Captain Ashbrook’s to be there, an’t he ?”

“ Oh, Martha, Martha ! I must say good night,” cried Rosabel, as if struck with a sudden panic ; for, in the gathering gloom, she discerned, at a little distance, Captain Ashbrook himself approaching. His air and

gait were too familiar to her, not to be quickly perceived ; and she galloped off, notwithstanding the parting query of Martha, who meant to detain her—

“ And will the family at the Hill be there ? ”

## CHAPTER IX.

“ Marriage is a matter of more worth  
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship.”

SHAKSPEARE.

HALES HALL had been for some time in a state of pleasing commotion, with the bustle of preparation for Miss Fortescue's wedding. Mr. Spooner was liberal and rich, extremely good-natured; one of those men who deal in minutiae;—a person to take with you on a shopping expedition; of unwearied patience, that rare virtue in the male sex; his virtues were all in the small line, but still they were virtues. His acquirements corresponded with his character: he wound silk beautifully, and engraved names upon cards with a pen, in German capitals, well enough to puzzle any one; was famous in collecting charades, and played upon the flute. Love seemed to him nothing but an agreeable recreation, an extension of his affec-



tion for silks, ribbons, and flounces, to the person who wore them ; and, as all the county said, Mr. Spooner had made a most suitable choice ; for Charlotte was an excellent block to hang dresses upon—every thing, as Mr. Spooner thought, became her so well : and that was a great point in her favour with him. The bride elect, brought up, as she was, to think that nothing was so valuable in life as an opportunity of forming a suitable establishment, was perfectly satisfied with what she called her choice, but, in fact, with the choice of Mrs. Waldegrave. Her intended help-mate was, to use the words of Mrs. Waldegrave, “devoted to her.” Her father, though he could not be brought to rate Mr. Spooner very highly, and though he always fell asleep after dinner when they were alone together, was evidently pleased at the match ; and a certain importance, which always attends the happy, chosen fair one on these occasions, was highly agreeable to Charlotte. All, therefore, went on well ; and the course of true love, not, on this occasion, fretted by opposition, nor disturbed by “the cataracts and breaks” of an over-sensibility, ran on smoothly, perhaps too smoothly to interest be-

holders, but kept from stagnating by the excitement of chusing plain or striped velvets, tissues or taffetas, barley-corn satins or clouded satins, and other important subjects of discussion. Whilst every day brought a fresh detachment of hats, for bonnets were not then at all in vogue, and plumes and dresses from London, arrivals of a different sort took place. First came Hubert, after a residence of six months in London; but he was not the Hubert who had left the parental home. Rosabel, as she sprang to meet him, saw a change in her brother's deportment, a change in the expression of his features, that struck her painfully, although she could not define in what it consisted. A few short months of gay and frivolous, and too probably dissipated, society had altered (so quick is youth in catching new impressions!)—had lamentably altered Hubert. The change was indescribable: the very tone of his sentiments was changed: fashion, money, all that is commonly called pleasure, seemed now to constitute the object of his being. Virtue, to use a vulgar expression, was at discount with him—so soon had he caught the tone of his elder

brother, Phillip, and of other triflers who constituted Mr. Phillip Fortescue's set.

This last-mentioned personage was one of those unpardonable beings, a grave, selfish, resolute, haughty rake. Careless morals, accompanied by careless manners and habits, come to us, excused, as it were, by the very disposition of the possessor. We can pardon every thing but premeditated evil-doing, and systematized selfishness. Charles Surface is, nevertheless, too popular a character among us. Indulged impulses soon settle into habitual vice; and the difference between gay and grave delinquency is chiefly as to the mode of practising it.

Between the brothers there was, as yet, a marked difference. Hubert could still look up; his glance, fearless, still met that of others: but Phillip had a downcast, sinister look, and his eye fell at the moment when it should have been raised to yours. In Hubert, quick, and kindly, and relenting feelings seemed often to combat with determined self indulgence, and with acquired notions of libertinism. But Phillip, longer inured to the consciousness of an evil

course, and now in his seven-and-twentieth year, had arrived at the perfection of self-esteem ; there was in him an habitual sneer at every thing honourable and elevated : a haughty meanness ; a self-indulgence, the more reprehensible, because he knew that the means for its gratification had been wrung from his father, reluctant to infringe upon the portions set apart for the future maintenance of his younger children, and already almost irretrievably embarrassed in his affairs.

Rosabel had hitherto known but little of her eldest brother. In his own family, he was remembered chiefly for acts of boyish tyranny, or for the grief, and frequent altercations between his parents, which he had occasioned in the life-time of a too-indulgent mother. By his family he was therefore feared, rather than loved ; and he took no pains, in this his last visit to his home, to eradicate these impressions. He paid little or no attention to his father ; and his indifference was perhaps as chilling to the parental heart as his previous undutifulness had been. He received Mrs. Waldegrave's and Aunt Alice's fawning assiduities as if they had been his due, and then troubled himself very

little about them. He passed judgment on his sisters with the decision of a practised connoisseur, who had made the grand tour, and seen all that foreign courts could afford of beauty or of fashion. "Charlotte," he said, "was well enough, but too thin; wanted style;—would do very well for Mr. Spooner." Rosabel, to the horror of his aunts, who with uplifted hands deprecated this judgment, he pronounced to be "the handsomest—indeed, passably good looking—a fine girl. Could no one be found for her?—What a bore to have so many brothers and sisters!—how many were there? He supposed some half dozen, somewhere or other. What did Sir John mean to do with them all?"

"Oh—Miss Fortescue," was Mrs. Waldegrave's reply, "is going to make, as you see, an unexceptionable establishment; but I really cannot answer for Rosa—she is so wayward—and the gentlemen do not take to her."

"Is there not a Captain Ashbrook hereabouts?" asked Phillip, as he languidly turned over the leaves of a novel. "Why won't he do for Rosabel—Rosa, as you call her? He is a marrying man, I presume?—at least, so his cousin Francis Ashbrook thinks, to his sorrow."

Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice exchanged looks.

"Here is Rosabel to answer for herself," said Mrs. Waldegrave, grimly. Rosa, love," with one of her indescribable east-wind smiles, said her Aunt—"Rosa, we are all so concerned that you should be left out of this wedding; and your brother has mentioned Captain Ashbrook, and wishes to know what you say to him."

"When you make your choice," said Phillip, conceitedly, and with great condescension, "look out for family first, if you please—I don't wish to have any body brought into the family—and then, money—money is the grand ingredient: do not expect me to own a heap of poor relations."

"Neither should I wish it," replied Rosabel, coldly. "When I degrade myself, Phillip, depend upon it you would be the last person I should apply to, to honour me with your notice, or to benefit me by your bounty."

"A spirited Miss," observed Phillip, contemptuously. "And lo—she is gone. After all, I do suspect Mrs. Spooner elect will become my favourite. Rosabel has too much of the

vixen. Well! I hope the house is to be cleared out before I am to come to the property, and that I am not to be encumbered with all this live stock."

"May many, many years elapse, my good sir, before that takes place," interrupted Mr. Lermont, who had recently arrived, to be present at the wedding of his old friend's daughter. "Your worthy, and I hope honoured, father is still in his prime."

"Hum—" answered Phillip, taking out his snuff-box, and looking at the old man with a half-insolent, half-unmeaning air. "Where is Hubert? who knows?" And, sauntering into the billiard-room, he left Mr. Lermont to entertain the old ladies.

There had been a great deal to arrange, and Mrs. Waldegrave's mind had scarcely yet become tranquil after the agitation of settling who were, and who were not, to be at the wedding. Lord and Lady Lovaine were secured; but Captain Ashbrook had at first declined, until Mr. Spooner had ridden over to him, to say that it would be deemed an act of personal unkindness to himself, as his own nearest relation, if he would not consent to act as his

bridesman upon the occasion. The marriage was to be succeeded by a stately dinner, and a ball. The dinner was to comprise, of course, the relatives—those, at least, worth comprising,—and the intimate friends; and the ball was to take in all the community;—a handful of young officers from Cheverton,—half-a-dozen young curates,—some of Sir John's former electioneering constituents, to whom he wished to show still some attention; and, among others of inferior caste, the family at the Hill.

Rosabel had of late seen little of the Warner family; for her inclinations did not lead her into society. She dreaded, too, the kind solicitude which she knew her two friends would entertain, when they observed her dejection. They had, however, occasionally met; but Rosabel had sedulously avoided any thing like a confidential communication. Phillis, she well knew, would censure Captain Ashbrook with unrelenting severity; she feared Amy's condolence no less than Phillis's good advice; and the sisters were, therefore, still impressed with the conviction, that a secret prepossession in favour of their brother was the predominant feeling in Rosabel's mind.



The wedding day in due course of time arrived ; the morning was bright, and fine, and settled. The bells of Hales church awoke the bride elect at six o'clock in the morning with their merry peals, and were wafted by the gale even to Ashbrook. The younger children of the Fortescue family were abroad betimes, restless and unsettled. Rosabel was also in the pleasure grounds at an unusually early hour ; but her step denoted not the elasticity of happiness ; she sought the morning air as a relief for dejection, rather than as an auxiliary to pleasure. A council of state had been held the night before, as to proprieties and improprieties : Mrs. Waldegrave in the chair. Consequently, the gentlemen breakfasted alone in the library ; the ladies alone in Mrs. Waldegrave's dressing room ; and the two divisions were not to meet until they met in the church. There were precedents for every step, and the whole ceremonial from first to last was like the coronation, a composite of all preceding coronations ; a performance compiled from the several nuptials of Lord and Lady Lovaine, Sir John and Lady Fortescue, Mr. and Mrs. Waldegrave, Mr. and Mrs. Spooner, senior.

Thus guaranteed, they could not, as Mrs. Waldegrave observed, go wrong; "and it would be well," Lady Lovaine said, "if all their steps in life were so well considered as this one grand prelude." Her ladyship most condescendingly, as Miss Alice observed, and his lordship, whose poor health rendered it the more particular compliment, slept at Ashbrook on the preceding evening; and drove up in their state coach about ten o'clock. The coach, belaboured with ornaments, after the fashion of those times, with windows large and low, was not one of Hatchett's new-built, then coming into vogue, but had been in the family many years and was only varnished up for the occasion. It was drawn by four corpulent beasts, who had been upon retired pensions for many years, but were now heavily caparisoned, and brought out upon actual duty, surmounted by two postilions, in laced jackets and little black poke caps.

The sound of the coach wheels put the whole house in a commotion; and the sight of Lady Lovaine's head appearing at the carriage window was, as little Howard expressed it, the best part of the show. Her ladyship, wishing indeed to pay an especial respect to the occa-

sion, had launched out into the extravagance of a new balloon hat of the last Paris fashion, rendered tolerable to the English when adopted as it was by the elegant Miss Farren, but by no means consonant with Lady Lovaine's general appearance. For those who have continued long faithful to one mode of costume, do wisely not to alter rashly the habits of years. This hat, of a globular form, made of chip, lined with silk, drum tight, and garnished with long streamers of ribbon at the sides, served, indeed, completely to eclipse Lord Lovaine, who sat in the opposite side of the coach, in a Burgundy-coloured coat, with a white striped velvet waistcoat and inexpressibles; all gay and costly, but, being made to his lordship's pattern two years previously, hung sadly about his wasted person—he flattering himself all the while that it was only the fault of the tailor.

“Captain Ashbrook,” screamed Lady Lovaine to the servants, “has driven on in his own carriage towards the church. I hope the ladies are not likely to be long. My lord has his valerian draught to take at eleven—pray tell Mrs. Waldegrave *that*.”

The servant disappeared to deliver the im-

portant message, which was passed from one attendant to another, was echoed through the hall and whispered from room to room, until it reached Mrs. Waldegrave's anxious ear. She, in a fashionable undress, a hood, *couleur de corbeau*, a lemon-coloured satin dress striped and interwoven with straw, and a flat dish-like round hat, stuck upon the top of her frizzed and powdered hair, descended with a gait more erect than usual to the apartment of the bride elect; whose toilet, as well as that of the bridesmaid, was already far advanced, though not wholly completed.

The sisters were in some respects dressed alike, though Charlotte's attire was in its material the most costly. Her dress, which was of white taffeta, was trimmed with valuable laces down each side of the skirt, which, opening in front, displayed a white satin petticoat, embroidered for the occasion by Mrs. Waldegrave. Her light hair was fastened up at the top into a knot with large pins of pearl, and valuable ornaments lay on the bare forehead, and adorned her ears and bosom. A veil of the richest point lace hung down her back, and this could be drawn over her face at pleasure. Her shoes were ornamented with sprigs of pearl. Yet

Charlotte, too conscious of her conspicuous claims to admiration, failed to attract or interest ; and Rosabel's simple, careless appearance, whilst it disarmed criticism by its indifference, not to say negligence, and was less calculated to dazzle the eye, attracted all hearts that were capable of being moved, by the artless expressions of natural feeling on a countenance sufficiently lovely, under ordinary circumstances, to rivet some portion of attention ; but, when varied by contending and over-powering emotions, interesting in the highest degree.

The equipages intended to convey the party to the church were formally drawn up in due order to the hall door, whilst Sir John and Mr. Lermont, disliking the parade, quietly set out to walk across the fields to the village. The coachmen, furbished out in old dress liveries, once or twice used when their master had gone to court, with large nosegays in their buttons, "revived," as Mrs. Waldegrave said, "the recollection of poor dear Mr. Waldegrave" and of her own wedding ; whilst sundry of the villagers, who had been Sir John's javelin men when he was sheriff, now being recalled into temporary attendance behind the widow's own carriage,

recalled to Aunt Alice's mind the image of Mr. Warner, who was fulfilling this year, much to his own satisfaction, that ancient and imposing office. All then was in readiness; Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice were seated in their carriage; Phillip and Hubert in theirs: yet the bride and bridesmaid still lingered. Charlotte, it was true, had received the parting compliments of her admiring attendants, and with becoming blushes had prepared to leave her apartment, but Rosabel entreated her for one moment to stop.

"Charlotte," she said, timidly, "if I am not happy to-day—if I do not seem to rejoice at your happiness—my dearest sister, do not think it unkindness." She wept as she spoke, but quickly repressing her tears, added: "Will you forgive me now all little disputes or coolnesses that have been between us? Dear Charlotte, I have ever loved you; my sister, you know not how wretched or desolate I shall be without you."

"Dear Rosabel, what a time, love, to ask my forgiveness!—and I am sure you have it; it is quite a duty to forgive," replied Charlotte,

kissing the flushed cheek of her weeping sister, over which the rich tresses fell, as usual, already disordered. "Dear Rosabel, I am sure Mr. Spooner and I shall always be happy to see you at Spooner Park, love. He is of a most affectionate disposition ; and so, as you well know, Rosa, am I."

"Miss Rosa will not be fit to be seen," interposed the old housekeeper, parting back the locks which fell forward as she stooped, bedewed with tears, and confining them under a sort of coronal of white roses, under which they had been previously gathered up.

"Dear, that is Hubert calling," said Charlotte ; "Mr. Spooner will be so impatient." But she stood still and looked at Rosabel.

"Dearest Charlotte!" said Rosabel, hastily drying her tears, "I will strive not to be so foolish—not to mar your happiness, if I cannot—if—but no matter," she added, "I will behave better, I will indeed ; you shall see no more tears to-day, Charlotte ; *I* ought to sustain you," she added, tenderly, as arm in arm the sisters descended to the hall, passed through a row of inquisitive and admiring domestics,

and entered, with feelings how complicated, and in each how different ! the appropriate conveyance.

The sisters spoke not until they reached the church, when Charlotte, catching a glimpse of a white satin waistcoat in the porch, said,—“there is Mr. Spooner, and, Rosa, Captain Ashbrook. Ah, Rose ! who knows how soon our gay bridesman may be here as bridegroom ? I guess, but I will not say.”

“My dear Charlotte,” said Rosabel, do not, by any foolish jesting with any one, lead to—to—any such notion being hinted at in the neighbourhood. In short, it would be disagreeable to me :—such a thing never, never can be,” she added, vehemently, “and would be extremely disagreeable to both parties,” she concluded with a forced and almost instantaneous calmness, as she saw Captain Ashbrook looking towards the carriage.

The approach to the church was lined with villagers, all in their Sunday attire. Sir John met his daughters at the church door.

“I declare,” whispered Hubert, to his brother Phillip, who was standing with him, gorgeously attired, near the middle aisle, “I



should think Rosa were the bride ; she is as pale as the stone lady in the chancel."

Phillip burst into a laugh, not so far suppressed as not to catch the grave glance of his father.

Captain Ashbrook was standing with Mr. Spooner near the altar ; Lord Lovaine, propped up with pillows on a chair, placed near a stove, was paying his compliments of ceremony to Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice ; but he hobbled up to the bride elect, as well as his gout, and still more his flannels, would permit, saying :—

" *Miss Fortescue*, for the last time—my very good wishes attend you, and my favourite Miss Rosabella too. I declare I do not know the lovely sisters apart, they are extremely alike ; are they not ? Pretty creatures, arn't they ?"

His questions being otherwise unheeded, his glance rested upon Captain Ashbrook for a reply.—" Hey ? what is your opinion ; you see the resemblance, don't you, Ashbrook ?"

" No, my Lord," Captain Ashbrook answered, with imperturbable coolness, as if he had never seen either of the sisters before.

" Oh ! my Lord, you're exerting yourself too

much," said Mrs. Waldegrave, in a condoling accent, to the noble invalid. "I am so afraid the flags are damp."

"That puts me in mind," said Lord Lovaine, in a low tone, "of a capital joke; but my lady tells it better than I do. It was told me, of my physician, Dr. D., and I almost forget it."

"Ah, very good," muttered Mrs. Waldegrave. "How one's feelings, my Lord, are tried upon occasions like the present—my sweet Charlotte, how lovely she looks. Captain Ashbrook, is not the bride charming?"

"Oh, certainly!" was Captain Ashbrook's answer, his eyes fixed upon the communion table.

"My brother," whispered Mrs. Waldegrave to Lord Lovaine, "feels so much, you know, my poor dear sister Fortescue's monument being just opposite."

"A fine woman," answered Lord Lovaine; "I remember her at Ranelagh."

"What are they waiting for?" enquired Hubert, coming up by a cross-road, over the tops of pews and the summits of hassocks; "we might all be married in this time."

“ It is a cursed bore,” said Phillip, yawning.

“ And it is a vast pity,” observed Mr. Lermont, “ that all this pretty show should be expended upon one happy couple only—and that we could not find Miss Rosa a helpmate.” He slightly touched her shoulder as he spoke.

Rosabel had heard the well-meant and ill-timed speech without turning round ; but, as she then looked up in the kind, benignant countenance of her partial old friend, the affectionate glance was too much for her resolution, and she turned not so quickly away, but that a tear or two was visible.

This little scene was only perceived by one person, and he saw it not unmoved ; but he excelled Rosabel, as men always excel women, in one thing,\* in the power of concealing and controuling their feelings.

And now the ceremony began. Woe be to those who wish to alienate this solemn ritual from its ancient character of a religious service. It is to that sacred character, which custom has given to the institution of marriage, that persons of weak resolution and of easy virtue owe much of their safety from the perils

of conjugal infidelity. Whilst the mode, and place, of the vow cannot render it, in the sight of the highly principled, more binding than the simple word of the parties, it is yet endeared and elevated in our estimation by these circumstances: much of the value of all we possess depends upon association; let that association be termed superstition, or piety, according to the various notions of various people.

Mr. Spooner was by far the most agitated of the two; and felt himself, as he afterwards expressed it, very nervous. Yet he ran no risks; he married for externals; he could not be deceived. Charlotte too had every prospect of being happy in her own way. Why then did her father tremble as he gave her to her husband?—why stood the tear in Mr. Lermont's eye?—what made Mrs. Spooner, a fat, comfortable old lady, who had dormoused through life upon a jointure of three thousand a-year—what made her weep?

Lady Lovaine, who stood by, gaunt as a monumental figure, thought it all very foolish, and looked almost angrily at Rosabel, who seemed, as her ladyship thought, half stupified, keeping

her eyes fixed upon the clergyman, and forgetting to take off the bride's right-hand glove. In short, as her ladyship, with more justice than she weened, observed, "making a sad bungle of the business altogether."

Captain Ashbrook's eyes were calmly bent upon the ground, his face, perhaps, a shade paler than usual ; most probably, as good Mrs. Spooner remarked, he had never been at a wedding before, "and did not know all the ins and outs of it." However, he behaved, as he usually did, with the presence of mind of a man accustomed to be placed in various situations ; and, to Rosabel's fancy, the equanimity of his deportment seemed to shew that he did not wish to disturb the family harmony by staying away upon an occasion which he considered was to him a mere matter of business. He had obviously no intention whatsoever of putting himself in Rosabel's way, or of seeking again her favour. There was no pique, no forced gaiety obvious throughout the whole day. It was agreed that he had never appeared to more advantage. His fine person was unconsciously, as it were, set off by the wedding attire, which seemed to suit him, as every spe-

cies of full dress does, in general, become a man of gentlemanly exterior; whilst the ardour of his usual manner, and the enthusiasm which marked the usual expression of his opinions, were tempered, on this occasion, with a gravity almost bordering upon pensiveness. To common observers, however, Captain Ashbrook appeared to be tranquilly happy; and Rosabel felt that she was the only sufferer. And she had much, on that day, for a mind already wounded by disappointment, and, perhaps, still combating with an attachment which she wished to cancel from her memory, to sustain.

"A wedding," observed Mr. Lermont, as the company sat down to a collation, after their return from church, "draws all parties together."

This speech, like most speeches which are intended to make people cordial, produced a silence.

"Captain Ashbrook," said poor old Lord Lovaine, who was quite happy with a bottle of Madeira to his right, "I had the start of you to-day. Had I not, Miss Rosabella, hey? I am of the old school; and, in my younger days,

it was the custom, as far as my recollection goes, for the bridesman to salute, respectfully, of course, the bride, after the ceremony."

"And the bridesmaid too," said Hubert.

"My Lord," cried Mrs. Waldegrave, who was anxious to divert her male relatives from a subject so improper; "what story were you doing me the honour to say I should hear after church? If it will not fatigue you too much—something about a damp church."

"Oh! my lady tells that best," answered Lord Lovaine; but I don't know that it is altogether the proper anecdote for the present company;" looking, as he spoke, at the clergyman who had officiated. "It was my doctor—he, he—the famous Dr. D., of Shrewsbury—what was it, my Lady? To the best of my recollection it was this—he had a patient very ill, with rheumatism—"

"No; it was gout," said Lady Lovaine.

"And he said to her, Madam—"

"It was Sir, if you please, my Lord."

"Sir, how did you get this disease? 'By going to church'—'Hum!—well, sir, we will make you well,'—it was, to the best of my re-

collection—"we will make you well, and let me never more hear of your being in that d—d church.'"

The old lord, having come to this critical pause in his story, sank back quite exhausted, and addressed himself once more to his half-pint bottle.

"A capital story, indeed," observed Mr. Lermont.

"Is that all?" said Phillip.

"Medical men are such atheists," said Lady Lovaine, "they have no belief in any thing; that is well known. So the doctor's patient, quite shocked, said, 'what, what church, Doctor?' 'Oh,' said the Doctor, I meant to say—'"

"A *damp* church," Lord Lovaine cried, almost breathless; eager to come in at the last gasp of his story, and quite elated with his own wit.

"I believe," said Sir John Fortescue, "that your Ladyship's assertion is too general, and that our greatest proficients in medical science have been guided by religious principles of action."

"I think Dr. S——," said Captain Ashbrook, "lived at Derby, did he not? I re-



member hearing of him when I was in Derbyshire."

"In Derbyshire—how can he dare to mention Derbyshire?" thought Rosabel, as a deep blush suffused her face. For a moment their eyes met; his were instantly withdrawn, and her's expressed no melting kindness at that moment, but rather indignation and dislike.

Meanwhile, time wore away. The only two persons of the party who seemed entirely at their ease were Mr. Phillip and Mr. Hubert Fortescue; Mrs. Waldegrave and Aunt Alice sat erect, and cast a chilling shade upon all within their immediate influence. The fair bride was placed between Lord Lovaine and the bridegroom, and on the other side sat Lady Lovaine, her balloon hat towering above the rest—tall, thin, and crabbed, looking like an old-fashioned vinegar cruet among a set of modern castors: beside her was Phillip; and, opposite, Mr. Lermont, trying his best to make every one merry and happy, but unable to elicit more than a gentle smile from Captain Ashbrook, or a glance of kindness from Rosabel.

Mrs. Spooner, in full good-humour, enjoying,

without any foolish feelings of romance, a good luncheon, undismayed by Lady Lovaine's ill-suppressed ill-humour, and much in love with a pigeon-pie, filled, and more than filled, the next space. Then came Sir John Fortescue, who had unluckily his deaf side towards her, and who was more than usually grave and abstracted ; for his eyes were often turned with anxiety upon his second daughter, whose dejection he saw, but which he could not wholly explain. It was a relief, doubtless, to all parties, when Mr. Spooner's carriage and four was announced, and the happy couple drove off on their first stage to Clifton.

## CHAPTER X.

“ ——— Indeed, I know not :  
My mind is not advised by my heart  
Of its true bias ; therefore, I pray excuse me.”  
ANNE BOLEYN.

THE party left behind were, of course, expected to stay dinner, and the question was, after the newly married couple had left, how to dispose of themselves until four o'clock. Captain Ashbrook pleaded business, and begged to return home, and to be excused from joining the party at dinner ; but he was over-ruled by Sir John's grave, and evidently sincere, assurances, that such an arrangement would give him great regret ; he left, therefore, giving an evidently reluctant promise to be present at the appointed hour. Rosabel had disappeared ; no one could find her ; and the two young men were at billiards. Lady Lovaine, Mrs. Spooner, and Mr. Lermont hung on hand, as far as entertainment was concerned.

Lady Lovaine wished to see the village, and desired that Rosabel might be found to accompany her; but Rosabel, dreading her Ladyship's interrogatories, and overpowered by taking leave of Charlotte, had fled to her usual haunts in the more secluded part of the park. Lady Lovaine, therefore, set off on her walk, in very ill-humour, followed by the substantial Mrs. Spooner, whose slow, short steps her Ladyship out-walked without any scruple, whilst good Mr. Lermont kept hovering between the two, anxious, but unable, to pay them equal attention. Meanwhile, Sir John Fortescue had retired to write some letters, and Lord Lovaine to lie down in Mrs. Waldegrave's private sitting room, with a box of dinner pills by his side, and a velvet night-cap drawn over his head.

Rosabel, emancipated from a restraint which was almost insupportable to her, was glad to find herself in company with gueldre roses and honey-suckles, eglantine and syringas, and to feel the fresh air blowing over fields, rich, until lately, with the cowslip, and now fragrant with the meadow sweet, and the varied family of grasses. She seated herself on a stile, near the path which crossed to Ashbrook, and looked, for the first

time since her return from Derbyshire, upon the glimpse which it afforded of Captain Ashbrook's residence. She looked at it long and wistfully. Since she had seen Captain Ashbrook, heard him speak, gazed unseen upon a countenance which, if the countenance be an index to the heart, seemed to shew that all was right within—she could not imagine that he could be guilty. In a few days he would have left Ashbrook; in less than a fortnight he would leave England—they might, perhaps, never meet again. Hating, despising him, as she intended to do, and fancied she did, she longed to exchange one token of mutual forgiveness, and thought it was only Christian charity which impelled her to wish that a kindly farewell might obliterate all ill-will. Perhaps he might be cut off in this his next expedition—she wished it were possible to move him to repentance; reparation of the miseries which he had inflicted were impossible—but that he sorrowed for them, it would be a comfort for her to know.

Whilst these thoughts passed through her mind, some one crossed the path near her; she was startled, and gave a slight scream. It was Captain Ashbrook. He stood for a moment,

and, then recollecting himself, with a respectful bow, moved on, crossed the field, without looking to the right or to the left, passed over another stile, and proceeded on his road to Ashbrook until he was out of sight.

Rosabel seated herself on the little mound, and wept. What reason had she to weep? What right to feel herself abandoned and neglected now by every one, a prey to hopeless regrets, without one ray of sunshine on the distant prospect of her journey through life? "But never," said she to herself, "shall he see, or think, that I repent or sorrow for my decision. Oh, weak and wicked that I am, thus to grieve! At least, however, I will confine my disgrace, my unworthy weakness, to myself; and I will endeavour, if I cannot conquer, at any rate to conceal it." And, fortified with this resolution, she returned home.

Meantime, Lady Lovaine was endeavouring, but in vain, to puzzle out what had occurred between her nephew and Rosabel. She was little inclined to put up with her own will and pleasure being thwarted by Lord Lovaine's heir, or by such a child as Rosabel. "Yet, I know," she reflected, "that it is of no use

striving to get to an understanding of the business from Ashbrook ; he can be vastly repelling if he pleases ; and if he does not chuse to marry, Medlicote must come to that spendthrift, Francis Ashbrook, and it would be brought to the auctioneer's hammer in due time, were it not for the entail. Perhaps the impediment lies with the young lady ; let me use my ears and eyes : we shall see where her preference has taken root."

Full of weighty designs, her Ladyship walked on, endeavouring to cut short, but to no effect, the attentions of the worthy Mr. Lermont—who strove skilfully to divide his assiduities between his two ladies.

"How charmingly the bride looked to-day, Mrs. Spooner," quoth the happy old gentleman ; —"and no less Mr. Spooner ; he has an admirable choice in dress."

"Why, yes," replied the good-natured lady : "he is a grand connoisseur in dress—so indeed are most gentlemen."

"Yet they never can be taught the difference between a tabinet and a lutestring," cried Lady Lovaine, walking very fast, and without looking behind her—"Ashbrook, for instance, who is

so clever in every thing else, cannot, nor can my lord, who is not altogether so clever—nor many other sensible men of my acquaintance.”

“And, upon my word,” said Mr. Lermont, it is to me a mystery—but I only know that Miss Charlotte, Mrs. Spooner that is, looks well in any dress, as also does her sister, Miss Fortescue I suppose I must now call her,” added the old man, with a sigh.

“Those are two ill-bred youths, Sir John’s sons,” remarked Lady Lovaine; most ill-conditioned young gentlemen in respect to manners.”

“Oh, they are young, my lady,” said Mr. Lermont, deprecatingly; “and they have been a good deal humoured.”

“They will be young all their lives,” resumed Lady Lovaine, sharply;—“the word respect is now struck out of young men’s dictionaries. They respect neither age, nor knowledge, nor Divine Wisdom itself, I believe. In my opinion, a man should skip from sixteen to thirty; in the intervening years he is odious.”

“I should make exceptions to that,” said



Mrs. Spooner, "in the person of my own son, who is one of the most dutiful, obliging, affectionate creatures!—"

"I dare say he is," answered Lady Lovaine, shortly—

"And in regard also to Captain Ashbrook, who is a very well-mannered young gentleman, to my taste."

"Ashbrook is well enough," replied Lady Lovaine, "when he has all his own way; but he has passed over the age of folly—he is eight-and-twenty. To me, it is most remarkable, Mr. Lermont, that the best people have generally the worst sons."

"It is a melancholy fact," replied Mr. Lermont.—

"And quite unaccountable; it is as well for men to marry betimes, I fancy, now-a-days:—I don't know what they mean," she added, indignantly, "by not marrying when there's an estate in the way. I could have wished—but"—she stopped short, and the listening Mrs. Spooner, and the according, complying Mr. Lermont, were forced to imagine the rest of her Ladyship's wishes.

The dinner-hour, in time, arrived; as usual,

the party were assembled half an hour before either Mr. Phillip or Mr. Hubert Fortescue were ready to appear. When the party were worn out of all patience, and Sir John had ordered the last dinner-bell to be rung, Mr. Phillip, in a rose-coloured satin waistcoat and 'point device' in all other respects, sauntered into the room, looked at every one, gave a slight inclination of the head to some, vouchsafed four words to another, and then stretched himself out as well as he could in a well-stuffed arm chair—for, then, easy chairs were not introduced—saying, "I thought dinner had been ready."

In a few minutes Mr. Hubert followed his prototype, imitating as nearly as good-nature would permit him, the demeanour of his brother;—trigged out in the first fashion, and perfumed to the last degree—for indeed the 'pouncet box' and the 'civet cat' of Hotspur have been known to all ages, and under every variation of manners, in other respects, to the frivolous and the vain.

"A family party!" whispered Hubert to Rosabel, as, having made the round of the circle, he seated himself by his sister.

"No," said Rosabel, "do you not see Mr.

and Mrs. Goodyer, and Lady Percival, and Captain Ashbrook?"

Captain Ashbrook was standing a little way from Rosabel, but so quick was his ear, or so keen his perception of her movements, that he turned round, looked at her for an instant, and then resumed his position. Lady Lovaine, who sat at the upper end of the room, half-dozing, as it seemed, and, according to her own acknowledgment, hungry, and out of sorts with these cold, quarrelsome lovers, had her eyes fixed upon Rosabel at this minute.

"There has been something or other the matter—else why this settled avoidance?" thought her Ladyship.

However, the party moved in stately array down to the dining-room, without any thing more occurring to elucidate the subject of Lady Lovaine's thoughts. Dinner passed off, as most dinners on very joyous occasions do, with funereal gravity; whilst, during the ceremonial, Rosabel received, sometimes in derision from Hubert, sometimes in grave formality from her father, and once, upon a matter of complete necessity, from Captain Ashbrook, her new appellation of "Miss Fortescue." It was a

relief to her when at length the ladies "moved off," as Hubert expressed it, and withdrew their saintly presence from the masculine portion of the company.

Rosabel immediately hastened to the nursery, where her chief pleasures had long existed, and with pride assisted in attiring the young tribe there for the evening's ball. Sir John's two younger boys were now at school, and, of his numerous family, there remained at home two little girls only, and Howard. The little girls were, as I have mentioned before, twins, and were at that age when the unconscious fascinations of infancy begin to yield to the charms of developed intelligence, and to the graces of acquirement. In person, Annette and Caroline were different, although in size alike. Annette had the dark flashing eye, and rich tints of complexion, of her elder sister Rosabel, only not tempered with so much sweetness, nor rendered interesting by incessant variety of expression. Caroline was plain, but soft and attractive; her black, glossy hair, and clear and pale complexion, formed a striking contrast to the characteristics of her twin sister.

Charlotte, though gentle and inoffensive,

had but little cherished the affections of her younger brothers and sisters ; but Rosabel, left much to herself, and devoid of many objects of interest, had, by loving first, taught these little ones to love her ; for the affection which we bestow upon children, if not lavished in folly, is usually returned with interest. It was now, with pride and pleasure, that Rosabel stooped down to smooth the bright locks of her little sisters, looked into their smiling faces, led Howard from his rocking horse, and escaping from the pursuit and assistance of the nurse, conducted them all three, with a countenance no less glowing than theirs, into the ball room.

The musicians were already in readiness, and the candles were lighted ; Rosabel did not expect to find any of the company arrived ; but she wished to see the infantile delight of Howard, before any arrivals took place, at the chalked devices on the floor ; the garlands, the lights, the music ; and, desiring the musicians to strike up a lively tune, she and the young trio set up an irregular but sprightly dance, in which, if science were wanting, the true spirit of dancing was, at any rate, to be found.

Rosabel was all happiness, flying about the room with Howard, when a stray gentleman or two, tempted out of the dining-room by the sounds of music, came in. She did not perceive them for some moments; when, hearing Hubert's voice, she turned round and gaily addressed him. Behind her brother stood Captain Ashbrook; his eyes rested upon her countenance with mingled admiration and affection; he seemed to have wholly forgotten himself; yet, in a few moments, he turned away hastily, and left the room.

"Come, Rosa, come," cried Howard; "you do not dance now—what is the matter with you?"

"Rosa is tired, perhaps," said the gentle Caroline.

"Let us have a gavotte—do, Rosa," cried Annette.

"Or the minuet de la cour," exclaimed Hubert, figuring about, whilst he contemplated his figure in a large pier glass.

"I think Miss Fortescue ought to be receiving her company, instead of trifling away her time here," were sounds which were now heard in terror by the younger tribe; for they knew

their Aunt Waldegrave's voice. "Sir John, Rosabel, is expecting you in the drawing-room.—And my Lady Lovaine has a particular wish to see the first set. The moon will be up at nine.—She cannot stay much later—and, of course, all the world is waiting for Miss Fortescue!"

"And I," thought Rosabel, as she followed her aunt, "who was of no importance yesterday, am now Miss Fortescue, and as such am pursued and annoyed. Charlotte, I envy you not your former honours."

The drawing-room was already nearly full of visitants. Mr. Warner, with a daughter on each arm, bustling in, was just entering: Amy, the gentle, pretty Amy, was not well—she had a cold.

"She will be better when Hubert comes," thought Rosabel.—"Ah! poor Amy!"

"But where is your brother?" she said, kindly to Phillis, unconscious that Lady Lovaine's glance was, at this moment, turned sharply upon her.

"He is coming! he will soon be here!" was Mr. Warner's answer, with a pleased, and gratified smile.

"Come, Phillis, come with me to the ball-room," cried Rosabel, taking her friend by the arm, and leaving, to the horror of Mrs. Waldegrave and the amusement of Lady Lovaine, a row of county belles, to find their way after her as well as they could.

"Just like her!" exclaimed Mrs. Waldegrave to Lady Lovaine, with a sigh—"What a loss her dear, sweet sister is to us all! Miss Fortescue will never be like Mrs. Spooner!"

"Never!" returned Lady Lovaine—"Will she, Ashbrook? And, as you say, her running off in that barem-scarem way is just like her. You have never suffered the child to act for herself! Can you be surprised that she does not know how to behave?"

"Indeed," observed Captain Ashbrook, good-naturedly, "I think that Miss Fortescue could not have managed it better, had she been ever so carefully tutored!—Here are many nice points of precedence to arrange among the ladies who are left: Miss Fortescue has settled the matter in a summary way."

"And then she is so fond of her friends at the Hill," whispered Mr. Lermont, apologetically—"her very heart is with them."



Captain Ashbrook looked, for a moment, at the speaker, and saw that he was in earnest,—and received this pleasing intelligence in silence.

“ Poor, sweet thing ! ” pursued Mr. Lermont, in a confidential tone ; “ ’tis a pity that Sir John sets his face against it so ; and as you have some influence with my Lady Lovaine, who has great influence with Mrs. Waldegrave, who, we all know, has the ear of Sir John, could you not, before you go abroad, give the young people a helping-hand to their happiness ? ” And the old gentleman turned round as he spoke, in the earnestness of his petition seizing Captain Ashbrook’s button-hole.

“ I would rather not interfere in the matter,” replied Captain Ashbrook ; “ but, are you sure that Miss Fortescue’s affections are really so far engaged to—to Mr. Henry Warner, I suppose you mean ? ”

The suppressed agitation of his manner was not observed by Mr. Lermont, who was burning with a desire to serve Rosabel.

“ My dear Sir,” he answered earnestly, “ I am sure of it. Have I not seen her anxiety, on my previous visit here, to go to the Hill ? Ah, my good sir, I am not so old, but that I

know the true symptoms of disappointed, or rather hopeless, love !”

“ Do you so ? Then I had better move out of your way,” said Captain Ashbrook, to himself, while a bitter smile played upon his lips. He descended to the dancing-room, and looked on the scene for some time, unobserved. Rosabel was now called forth to take a principal part in the festive scene. The young men were crowding to engage her as a partner: to her were left all the arrangements of the dance; for Hubert was wholly absorbed in Amy Warner, and Phillip positively declared he could not be troubled. Active, and perhaps finding a solace in moving about from one person to another, Rosabel, expeditiously, yet gently, marshalled her troops; and it was astonishing to see with what tact and address she introduced suitable partners to each other, and managed to please, at least, the majority of the company.

“ She will be quite tired—will she not ?” said good-natured Mrs. Spooner to Captain Ashbrook, who was leaning against a pillar in the extremity of the room.

“ No, I think not, for Mr. Henry Warner is assisting her,” replied Captain Ashbrook,

calmly.—At this moment he felt his coat-sleeve imperatively pulled. “Ashbrook,” said his aunt, Lady Lovaine, how can you be so remiss? how can you let those Warners be put so forward? go and ask Miss Fortescue to dance!”—and with a vigorous pull she made her intention of taking Captain Ashbrook up to Rosabel so apparent that he could not, in decency, draw back.

Rosabel had settled every thing, and was just arranging a set of juvenile country dancers at the end of the room, when Captain Ashbrook was thus brought up to her. She was leaning over one of her little sisters; and her countenance, as she raised her head, was happy, and beamed with benevolence—a sentiment which, expressed in such features, rendered it almost angelic. It changed, however, suddenly, as she saw Lady Lovaine and Captain Ashbrook before her.

“My nephew wishes to have the honour—come, Ashbrook, speak for yourself.—Miss Rosabel, of course you will not open the ball with a Warner,” whispered Lady Lovaine, in a low voice. “Has Mrs. Waldegrave sanctioned that?”

"I am not going to dance at all," said Rosabel, decidedly. "I have too much to do."

"Only *one* set," persisted Lady Lovaine. "The world will talk, indeed, if you do not open the ball. Nay! on your sister's wedding-day? So joyful an occasion—What! am I to bring tears? and in a ball-room, too? What is the world coming to?"

"I am sure it is disagreeable to Miss Fortescue to dance," interceded Captain Ashbrook. "Shall I tell the musicians to begin?"

"Oh, no!" said Rosabel; and she half-extended her hand to him, to lead her to the dance; but something restrained her—she could not. He might be gentlemanly, kind-hearted, forgiving, interesting; but he was—a seducer.—She could not offer him her hand.

Captain Ashbrook saw the movement, and he saw the withdrawal of Rosabel's proffered hand; and he could not but attribute to actual dislike, disgust perhaps, this hasty, and to others unimportant, action. No more pressing solicitations on Lady Lovaine's part could now be necessary, for in an instant he was gone. The ball went on, Rosabel performed her part,

the musicians played gaily till the morning, and Rosabel was no more annoyed, or tantalized by Captain Ashbrook's presence. For several years, they met no more.

## CHAPTER XI.

“ ————— if our virtues  
 Did not go forth of us, 'twere all as if  
 We had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd,  
 But to fine issues ; Nature never lends  
 The smallest scruple of her excellence,  
 But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines  
 Herself the glory of a creditor,  
 Both thanks and use.                      MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

So soon after the wedding as Rosabel conveniently could, she set off to visit old Martha, and, passing Ashbrook on her way, she observed that the window shutters were closed ; for Captain Ashbrook was gone—gone to join his regiment at Portsmouth, and probably to remain in foreign service some years. This was already known to her, and she flattered herself that she should feel relieved by the event of his departure. But there is something at all times painful in the aspect of a house closed and deserted, when we have once known its inhabitants ; and to Rosabel, Captain Ashbrook's dwelling had long been a source of lively interest ; a point towards which she had turned for consolation in his ab-

sence, and upon which every wish was centered during his residence there. She turned hastily away after looking a few short moments, and felt that she had taken leave of him for ever. It might be many years before he would return to Ashbrook ; and when he did return, it would probably be with new attachments, new connections, new honours. Rosabel and the ill-fated Mary would be alike forgotten. For the former there now remained nothing but to forget him ; if possible, to root out the recollection of hopes which were as chaff before the wind, and to reconcile herself to a life of subjection and of duty at home. Rosabel was supported, in her own particular trials, by the consciousness of having endeavoured at least to act rightly ; of having sacrificed, and it must be owned that she had sacrificed, the happiness of her life upon a principle of virtue ; but she had other pressing anxieties also upon her mind. She saw the growing attachment of Hubert and of Amy Warner, and she judged that it would be neither acceptable to Mr. Warner nor to Sir John Fortescue. Hubert was rash and extravagant, and had little beside his profession to depend upon. Amy's fortune would not bal-

ance, as Rosabel supposed, Sir John's aversion to a match which he would regard as unequal and degrading. Phillis Warner she also knew would scorn the idea of her sister's entering a family by whom she was looked upon as inferior. It was, perhaps, of some little use to Rosabel, at this time, to have her attention thus drawn by the griefs of others from her own "rooted sorrow," which tinged every object in life with its own dark hue. Her character, once so devoid of forethought, was now becoming anxious and almost desponding. She loved her brother Hubert, and she dreaded the effects of disappointment of this nature upon one whose remedy for the evil would be convivial parties and pleasure, not wholesome employment nor wise resignation. Nothing, Rosabel wisely considered, could have been so fortunate for Hubert, or so calculated to rouse his energies and to turn them to laudable ends, as a sincere attachment not without obstacles. She was right. Many a distinguished man has owed his eminence to the necessity of becoming great before he could become happy in domestic life. The romance of love in very young men is favourable alike to purity of conduct and to



habits of industry ; and parents who rashly check feelings at once natural and honourable, have often reason to lament the effects which the blight of severity has produced upon their children.

Rosabel found Martha wonderfully disposed to impart news and to hear news, and it was long before she could tear herself away. She was compelled to listen to the whole account of Captain Ashbrook's departure ; his parting words to Martha herself ; the regrets of his tenantry ; the dismay of his servants. Little did Martha know how she harrowed up the mind which had endeavoured to consign itself to repose. She regarded neither Rosabel's downcast looks nor her sighs, but went unflinchingly through the whole narrative ; with a tone of aggravation and reproach through the whole, as if to say, "I know you are the cause of this." At last the story was ended, and Rosabel returned ; more mournful, less resigned, and more doubtful as to the propriety of her own passed conduct, than she had been for some time.

Every day she was harassed by hearing various accounts of Captain Ashbrook's movements.

Hubert never failed to read the gazette of the day—promotions, exchanges, &c. and the frequent passing over of our troops to the United States, what regiments were shipped, what landed, was, as he confessed, all that the newspaper was worth reading for. One day he gave out, at breakfast, the news that Captain Ashbrook had set sail; another morning, the transports were driven back by foul weather; on a third, they put out to sea again, were still in the Downs a few days after; in a week, were supposed to have left the Channel. Rosabel had all this to go through, and thought herself fortunate that she had nothing more to encounter. Her father never looked off his newspaper, nor distressed her by any observation; and to every one else her brief, ill-fated attachment was unknown. Lady Lovaine, who must suspect it, most luckily at this time had the small-pox in the village, and, though threatening a visit every day, did not appear at Hales Hall until the winds had fairly wafted her nephew across the Atlantic. Mr. Lermont had happily departed. Rosabel was, therefore, left to bear up and to forget as well as she could; and she sustained the pressure of this early and severe disappoint-

ment with a fortitude the more admirable, that she could not forget the object of her attachment;—nor could she entirely reconcile to herself the concealment of her reasons for refusing Captain Ashbrook; but it was done; she had screened him from animadversion—she had not had the misery of hearing him condemned;—it was done: and the case being utterly hopeless, she trusted to time to wear away her increasing dejection. But time had many changes in store for her. Sir John at this period was harassed by the imprudencies of his sons. In the first place, Phillip, who was in London, was deeply involved in debt, over and above the settlement which his father had made in his favour upon his coming of age. Sir John was an old-fashioned man. In this philosophical age, debt is not considered evil, and it is thought prejudice to deem it a disgrace; but, in Sir John's eyes, it was impossible to consider himself as living in honour and respectability, whilst one of his family was existing upon credit, or residing within the rules of the Marshalsea or the King's Bench. He, therefore, made many sacrifices to extricate Phillip from difficulties; had recourse to mort-

gage upon mortgage, and to retrenchment after retrenchment, and found, when it was too late, that all was in vain—that a gulph is less fathomless than the wants of a spendthrift without remorse or principle; and that the father who begins by false indulgence, cannot, in after days, implant feelings of generous self-denial, when he had cherished every principle of luxury and selfishness in childhood.

Exasperated by these circumstances, Sir John was irritated afresh by an application from Hubert, beseeching him to sanction an engagement with Miss Amy Warner, and to make him some allowance to enable him to support a wife. The request was peremptorily refused; and both families considered themselves injured by the imprudent attachment. Sir John thought himself ill used that he had not been sooner apprized of it by Mr. Warner, who must have known of it some time. Mr. Warner considered it ungentlemanly in Sir John, and disrespectful to himself, to close the negotiation without consulting him on the subject or knowing his wishes. He rejected Hubert's entreaties, to be permitted at least to correspond, with scorn; sent the unhappy Amy

to visit some distant friends; and forbade all intercourse, except on the coolest terms, with Rosabel.

Amy's spirits sank under this blow. Her nature was sensitive and gentle, and she made no effort to rouse herself from grief. Yet, whilst it for some years materially affected her health, it caused not in her the ill effect which it produced upon Hubert.

Unluckily for him, he held a commission in one of those favoured bodies of military which were retained in times of war to guard the metropolis. Too near his brother, and under the influence of Phillip's loose associates and loose principles, Hubert, the gay, the once innocently gay Hubert, ran his course of dissipation—a fate but too common. For a little while he struggled with temptation, or yielded to it half reluctantly. At first, the stings of remorse were poignant; then they were less painful; soon they ceased altogether to trouble him.

Sir John and Rosabel knew not half the extent of these evils, until long after any remedy would have been too late. Rosabel, as the family circle was narrowed, found her import-

ance in the reduced circle considerably augmented. She had now at least the consolation of being useful to her father. Sir John had never been a person of what are commonly called high spirits; but, after repeated trials and disappointments, he became abstracted and morose; indifferent to general society, but more than formerly dependant upon the solace of his daughter's society and attentions.

Mrs. Waldegrave's cut and dried speeches and heartless manners, and measured sympathy, and Aunt Alice's murmurs of condolence, weak as water, seemed more repugnant to him than when he had not felt that within him which wanted a soothing, which responsive feelings can alone impart. Woman, often slighted and depreciated as she is by the other sex, has in times of illness or of sorrow ample retaliation. There is no balm which can supply the place of female affection.

There was a time when Rosabel, with unbroken spirits and in high health, would have thought it a restraint, if not a hardship, to be seated night after night in her father's study; with no better amusement than a book, with no other variety than the occupation of proffering

her little services from time to time to one as dejected as herself ; to watch the looks and anticipate the wishes of one who rarely expressed his feelings even to her—his dutiful and affectionate child :—but now, having tasted the stings of sorrows, uncared for by others, it was to Rosabel a solace to strive, at least, to mitigate those of a being who became daily more and more an object of affection and concern to her, and who seemed to her, like herself, heart-stricken. To plant herself near him every successive evening ; to watch his thoughtful countenance ; to dive, if possible, into her father's very thoughts ; to seize her opportunity of performing any of those trifling acts of duty and attention which a parent loves to receive from a child ; to shew, by silent efforts of affection, that sympathy, and sometimes even that commiseration, which she dared not by words to express ; to model herself in all things to his notions, inasmuch as she knew or could guess them, for Sir John seldom gave out his opinions ; these were poor Rosabel's consolations—her only consolations ; and, mingling as they did with a sense of that submission to Providence, which had been enforced by afflic-

tion; her mind, if not cheered, was sustained and chastened: it was preserved from hopelessly preying upon itself.

One evening, as she sat opposite to Sir John, her book on her knee, but her thoughts wandering to far different topics than those which the volume disclosed, she saw indications of dejection and of anxiety upon her father's furrowed brow, more settled than she had hitherto noticed; for, though transient expressions of suffering had sometimes been evinced, Sir John had repressed them with a powerful effort.

This night, however, they seemed too potent for concealment. Rosabel passed the evening in silence and solicitude; nor daring to intermeddle with griefs, into which it was not her part, as she well knew, to enquire; but as she passed at the stated hour to her own apartment, and bent her head to receive her father's parting kiss, she felt his tears moisten her brow. Unaccustomed to such signs of weakness or grief, and equally unaccustomed to proffer by words any little solace to her father, she reached the door; but, before she closed it, nature over-



mastered fear, and she returned to her father's side.

Sir John did not appear displeased. He gave her again his hand. "Good night, Rosa; go to rest, love; good night," he said, with a faltering voice. "Do not disturb me, Rosa," he added, more sternly; and she quickly left the room.

On the following day she was summoned to the honour of a private interview with Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice, and was then told, with many heart-felt lamentations, for the event affected all alike, that Sir John, after much deliberation, deemed it prudent to break up his establishment at Hales Hall, to shut the house up for several years, and to place his youngest daughters at school in Bath. For himself, business required his presence in London, whither he meant immediately to repair; "but not," added Mrs. Waldegrave, with a deep sigh, "in the manner, and with the style with which the Fortescues had hitherto taken up an occasional residence in the metropolis. A few old servants were alone to be retained. The carriage-horses sold off, with two exceptions

only, and a small, furnished house engaged for mere convenience, not far from the inns of court."

Rosabel heard a small part only of this harangue, which was delivered with the utmost solemnity.

"May I go with my father?" was her impatient question, before Mrs. Waldegrave had arrived at the climax of her narration.

"Such is his wish," replied her aunt; "but Sir John does not intend to constrain your inclinations; he fears that you may consider the privations and the occupations which he must encounter, may prove too much for you: that if you should prefer visiting Mrs. Evelyn—"

"Oh! no, no," cried Rosabel; "my mind is made up; I shall go with my father; there is no necessity for thinking about me—no privations can signify to me, where he is—I shall never leave him."

"It is a thousand pities," returned Mrs. Waldegrave, "that he will not have some one more experienced; you see, Alice, she thinks and asks nothing about my poor brother's affairs;

never gives money matters a thought," she continued, aside to her sister.

"Indeed," said Rosabel, quickly, you do me injustice: I have thought much about them of late. I see the necessity of what I never dreamed of before—economy. Has my father felt the changes of his circumstances very much?" she added, with great anxiety.

"Sir John foolishly takes to heart the misconduct of his son Phillip, more than the change in his family affairs, or the degradation of the whole connection.—"Your brother, Mr. Fortescue," continued Mrs. Waldegrave, dryly, and as if she were condemned to put the worst colouring upon the matter, "will not be able to shew his face again for many a year: he is beyond seas somewhere by this time; in one of our colonies, it is supposed—no matter where; the farther away, the better. Going on the Continent, now-a-days, is out of the question, unhappily. I am sorry to add, his name is coupled with some transaction not strictly honourable.—Ah! what would poor dear Sir Philip have said to this, had he been alive? He was a most excellent man; the

multiplication table was at his fingers' ends, as my Lady Lovaine used to say—but you seem struck dumb, Rosabel."

"My brother disgraced—my father and his family dishonoured by Phillip! How has he stood this?—my poor father!—dear, dear papa! What does my father say to this, madam?—Oh, but Hubert will repay him for this misery! Phillip," she continued, sighing deeply, "having been the eldest son, and surrounded by flatterers and false friends, has many excuses. We shall yet see how Hubert will turn out, and reward his good, kind, unhappy father."

Mrs. Waldegrave shook her head, and said, dryly, and discouragingly, "We shall see.—I am much obliged to my niece, Rosa, for the interest she takes in her poor Aunt Waldegrave's fate, after watching over her, and her brothers and sisters, I may say like a mother, for these five years; it has been a life of duty," she added, wiping her eyes; in which movement Miss Alice pathetically joined.

"My sister has been a slave to her brother's family," said the latter, her grief now rising to a chorus.

"Mr. Waldegrave's relations are, however,

so very anxious to have me," resumed Mrs. Waldegrave; "it has been their object, for years, to get me among them in Essex. I have, therefore, recommended my brother to place Annette and Caroline at school;—provided an establishment can be found in which they will meet with none but young ladies of their own rank,—in preference to our still taking charge of them. I hope they will not fret their little hearts out, nor pine till they are ill—poor little souls!"

"I think they will not," was Rosabel's private reflection: but, with unwonted forbearance, she merely said, "they will, I dare say, be very sorry to leave Hales."

"But, after all, what a comfort," said Mrs. Waldegrave, "to think that my friends, my Lord and Lady Lovaine, in particular, have sanctioned this arrangement. I wrote to her ladyship; and, in reply, she says—where is her letter?"—fumbling, as she spoke, in an abyss of a pocket, the pattern of which is now obsolete—"oh, here! Her ladyship writes so charmingly—so much to the purpose.

"‘I approve highly,’ her Ladyship observes, ‘of Sir John’s dismantling Hales Hall. Large

impoverished families are best turned out into the world, and not bred up with too lofty notions of their own consequence,' &c.—

“ And what a consolation,” added the amiable widow, folding up her letter, “ it is to do what one believes to be right; and that my lady happens to see it in that point of view! And again, her Ladyship observes,—now this relates to you, Rosa—

“ ‘ —Miss Rosabel has my best wishes for settling in the world: and, were not Ashbrook a confirmed old bachelor, I think he might have been hooked in. But let her not wait, for it is ten to one he may be shot off; in which case, I am glad there will not be a young widow for the family estate to support.’

“ Hem!—widows, she’s pleased to add—hem—this part is not so much to the purpose, Rosabel. She is not fond of widows. However, ’tis a great comfort to have her ladyship’s opinion.”

## CHAPTER XII.

“ Life with all its glories glides away, and the stern footstep of decay comes stealing on.”—MANRIQUE.

IN the course of a week after the conversation just related, Hales Hall was deserted, or at least a small portion of one wing only inhabited by those who were appointed to preserve and guard it. Sir John had borne the surrender of his hitherto cherished home-comforts with far greater composure than his family had expected. Perhaps, like some other persons similarly situated, he felt a relief that a large expensive establishment was given up, the continuance of which constituted a perpetual sinking fund of means already impaired. A tide of misfortune sometimes seems to overwhelm, at particular periods, particular families. The business which Sir John had now in hand, and which was, to general acquaintance, the pretext for his re-

moval to London, was a law-suit respecting his title to some property in a distant county ; and, by legal men, Sir John's case was considered by no means in a hopeful light.

Sir John accomplished his removal from Hales Hall before his neighbours were aware of his intention of leaving ; for he dreaded the well-meant adieux and elaborate condolence of some of his acquaintance, and a secret criticism of his plans and motives by others. In particular, he wished to escape Lady Lovaine ; but Rosabel felt that she could not, in gratitude, leave the country without visiting one who had shewn some value for her society. She went, therefore, to Medicote : Lady Lovaine, fortunately, or unfortunately, was from home—Lord Lovaine invisible ; and Rosabel was obliged to amuse herself, for the hour that the horses rested, the best way she could.

She thought within herself —“ I shall not see, perhaps, for years, this place again ; most likely I shall never see Captain Ashbrook again ; I should like, once more, to look at the Decoy, where first I walked with him : surely that cannot be wrong ! I have done all that I can to banish the remembrance of him. Am I



criminal in wishing to retrace those scenes which we enjoyed together when I thought him pure, and high-minded, and virtuous? Oh, why was I ever undeceived! Mary, would that I had never known your fate!"—"It is not," thought she, as she rambled down by a little copse on her road to the Decoy—"it is not that I cherish his image as I think of him *now*. No, it is what he was, or at least what I once thought him, that I cannot but love to dwell upon." Thus, self-deceiving, she traced, with faithful exactness, each little particular of the walk which she had enjoyed with Captain Ashbrook, when their acquaintance was in its infancy;—gazed at the belt of trees which he had criticised, and looked long upon the shallow stream whence he had plucked the *myosotis*. The very weed was growing there, flowerless, indeed, as were her hopes—dark and joyless.—The scene seemed no longer fair or interesting, and, listlessly, she turned away. "And now," said she to herself, as she returned to the house, and, winding round towards the front, saw the carriage in waiting for her—"let me try what change of scene—entire change—may do. I have tried every thing else—a sense of duty,

employment, and cherished indignation :—let me hope that in London I may cease to remember him. They say that is the place to banish all cares.”

She made her way dejectedly to the carriage ; but the sight of Lady Lovaine, on the lawn before the house, returned from her rambles, and in close confabulation with the village doctor, arrested her footsteps : she moved towards them.

“ You have not been near the village, I hope,” screamed Lady Lovaine, as she saw Rosabel approaching ;—“ it is confluent ; you know that, I suppose ?—you are sure to go blind if you take it—certain—there is one family without a single eye left—’tis horrid. You have been inoculated ? I have had my lord inoculated, though much against his will, I assure you—no child more refractory ; and men of seventy, and eighty, inoculated also—quite right, quite a necessary precaution—though I cannot say but that some of these old men were as well away.—Good morning, Mr. Simkins ; you will, I am sure, keep in mind my particular notions as to the black hellebore. I have a receipt for the pills I spoke of, which has been handed

down to us from my lord's great great grandmother ; so it must be good."

She turned towards the house. " And now, my dear, what have you been doing with Ashbrook ? for he was so low-spirited before he went away, I really thought of sending off for Simkins, thinking there might be some fulness about the region of the head—or heart, perhaps—hey ?" She looked round at Rosabel as she spoke, and had the comfort of seeing that she had abstracted a tear or two. " Well, I suppose, after all, Ashbrook was disappointed to have let your sister go by—for it seems that she was the one he admires—hey ? However, he has given up all thoughts of marriage, if he ever had any." She paused, but receiving no answer, she continued :—" And if he would chuse to exert his interest at home, for the family has great interest, he might be put high in command in that outlandish region ; but he has a foolish, romantic notion of standing on his own merits. I hate romances ; don't you ?"

The reply, whatever it might have been, was not waited for, and Lady Lovaine went on :—

" I thought you would have been mistress of Ashbrook ; but now, since Ashbrook could not

make up his mind to marry—for the objection must have rested on his side—as to his being refused, that is a thing incredible ;—since, however, he is off, and, perhaps, for what we know, has been in battle by this time—he may have lost an arm, or a leg, or both, before now,” added her Ladyship, thoughtfully,—“ I wish now, he had read over that work on gun-shot wounds before he left. Since all *that* is at an end, you must go and keep house for Sir John as well as you can ; and be thankful you are old enough to do without aunts and chaperons. Keep Mrs. Waldegrave in Essex, if you can ; and, depend upon it, both my lord and I shall think the more highly of you—(the poor man seldom thinks at all)—if you can manage to do without aunts or chaperons. With regard to your conduct at the head of your father’s house—by the bye, did I give you that receipt for dinner-pills which I mentioned ?—with regard to your behaviour, I shall always be most happy to advise you.”

“ Thank you,” said Rosabel, meekly, “ I have no doubt of it :” and, stepping into the carriage, Medlicote was soon distanced. She passed Drayfield, and, much as she dreaded condo-

lences and farewells, she just stepped out to bid poor Mrs. Rivers good-bye,—not without the heart-ache, it must be confessed—for Drayfield, peaceful Drayfield, had been the scene of many air-built castles, many happy delusions, now for ever faded away, or existing only in the agonizing recollection of the visionary being by whom they had been cherished.

Sir John and Rosabel travelled, by easy stages, to London. Their temporary abode in that vast city was fixed in a convenient, and, in that day, fashionable part of the town, Queen-square, Westminster ; yet, whilst far more in the centre of the polite world at that period than at the present time, Queen-square had, even then, an air of seclusion, amounting to gloom, and, contrasting strangely with the ignoble bustle of the surrounding streets. Its houses, however, were portly, and even spacious, and, affording a convenient ingress into St. James's Park, then in all its pristine dampness, were, on that account, the frequent resort of country families, who had not yet learned to endure an entire separation from green fields and fresh air.

The long continuance of war had now, for some time, begun to cast its gloom over the

metropolis ; yet Sir John and Rosabel had not long been settled in their new abode, before they experienced attentions from Sir John's acquaintance, and some temptations to join in society. Sir John's acquaintance were chiefly heavy county members, men of much substance and small wit, who came to legislate, and fell asleep in the House of Commons, or idled away their few actually waking hours at Brooks's. There was also amongst them a sprinkling of the old nobility, some of whom had been the Baronet's school-fellows ; for, in those times, friends, like garments, wore a long time. In the present day, an old friend is a sort of encumbrance ; a rapid succession takes place of gay acquaintance, with addenda, every season ; the supernumeraries scratched out, revised, and corrected according to fashion or convenience. An old friend conveys the idea of some dull duty, and is generally the person to whom we chuse to be ' not at home,' because old friends are not readily offended. Sir John, however, had a regular selection of these cumbersome articles ; for the poison of heartless inconstancy, which is now rapidly extending itself to the middle classes, was abhorred by

him, and in general unknown to the good old-fashioned school. Respectable families, some fifty or sixty years ago, were slow in forming fresh acquaintance, and reluctant to cast them off; 'to cut,' as it is technically called, any individual once admitted to your table, was, in Sir John's day, a work of deliberation; a measure which was only resorted to in extreme cases, and adopted with pain. But now there is a delightful facility in these matters; an indifference to old ties, an avidity to new ones, which makes one apt to think, that whilst the world is more enlightened than it was, it is also more heartless.

Sir John's estimation of moral worth was always superior, even to that predominant feature of his character—his family pride. With excellent discernment, he valued those who kept honestly and soberly within their own station, and maintained the habits and reputation of British Commercialists, without aiming to shine forth in characters of another sphere. A sort of remote family connection had caused him to rank among his own and Lady Fortescue's standard friends, an elderly couple, his banker and his banker's lady;

and some obligations in money matters, alas! had cemented this long acquaintance. A regular interchange of civilities had, indeed, subsisted between them for many years. When Mr. and Mrs. Warburton had wished for a fortnight of relaxation from business, or emancipation from smoke, they were welcome at Hales Hall, during the life-time of Lady Fortescue: when Sir John and Lady Fortescue had visited London, though they fixed their headquarters at an hotel, they dined frequently at the Warburtons'. Formal as were these visitations, they had grown into something very like friendship, notwithstanding the dissimilarity between the parties in their pursuits, their ideas, and even their education.

Mr. Warburton was a shrewd, hard-headed Yorkshireman, in whom the leaven of original vulgarity was still, in many things, apparent. He had his proportion of pride, as well as his more highly-born friend, Sir John; proud of his success in life, proud of his table, and even proud of his acquirements, which, like all partially educated men, he greatly over-rated: he was exempt from one failing—that of being proud of his wife. Having realized a large



fortune in business, he became, towards the latter period of his life, a living exemplification of the dangers of prosperity. In the first place, he had become very corpulent, since the animal man had been allowed to predominate over the intellectual. In the next place, he had grown very cross, since, having retired from trade, he had no occasion to be civil to any one. His disposition was naturally overbearing and tyrannical; and when he had no longer a host of clerks, errand-boys, and book-keepers, to vent his spleen upon, it redounded, as might have been expected, upon his wife. Yet Mr. Warburton was reputed to be an excellent member of society, and, by his own set, the best companion possible. His natural wit had not been refined into mere smartness by a too polite education, but was genuine ore embedded in vulgarity; he had picked up much miscellaneous information, which, with the aid of his own confidence in speech, his good wine and good dinners, gave him the reputation, especially among his convivial visitants, of being what is called a superior man.

Mrs. Warburton was one of those humble, conscientious, depressed beings, whose merits

are never properly appreciated in this life. She had set out with that mistaken estimate of conjugal duty, which leads women to submit to the caprices and tyranny of man from a misapprehension of their marriage vow ; she obeyed, in fear and trembling. No children had she to take her part, nor to give her a little consequence in society. Having, therefore, no claims of that kind to plead, she was thought to be public property, as far as deeds of utility were concerned. She was in every sense a slave :—a slave to her husband, to her relations, her friends, her servants ; and there was an air of dejected humility in every gesture, and even in her acts of kindness. Her services to her friends were, indeed, all of a lowly character ; for Mrs. Warburton, a little penurious from early and necessary habits of economy, was not exactly a generous woman. She would do many benevolent and useful actions at a cheap rate ; she could make large sacrifices, provided she could avoid incurring small expenses. A single half-crown spent in coach-hire would, perhaps, distress her more than the loss of a legacy ; and she felt for others as she did for herself. An ill-selected bargain, on the part of any

of her friends, grieved her long and seriously ; but she could pour out philosophical consolation in cases of bankruptcy, or actual calamity. Yet, Mrs. Warburton was a good woman ; only she made one mistake—she did not conceive that the principles of religion could be intended to apply to the minor trials of life ; and she allowed these, therefore, to vex, and even to depress her, until her husband lost all relish for her society, and treated her, as he considered her, only as a domestic drudge.

Whilst Sir John Fortescue had been in the zenith of his prosperity, Mr. Warburton had accounted it an honour to have the favour of the baronet's acquaintance, and his own intrinsic coarseness was kept down by the placid dignity of Sir John's manners. Mrs. Warburton, too, had both loved and admired Lady Fortescue, whose elegance was rendered still more attractive by her humility of manner, and a sweetness to all around her, of whatever rank, which could scarcely be called affability, for it seemed to imply no consciousness of a difference of station. But, when Sir John's necessities, and the extravagance of his sons, had rendered him, in some measure, dependent upon Mr. Warburton's pe-

cuniary aid, things were, in the mind of the banker, somewhat levelled; for his was that character of mind which gives to wealth the grand distinction.

Sir John made it a point of duty with his children to treat Mr. and Mrs. Warburton with respect, and to pay them certain attentions, which both Hubert and Rosabel were but too ready to evade. Over Hubert, indeed, his father had lost almost all power of restraint or command. He rarely visited his family; and when he did so, it was evidently with reluctance. As to the Warburtons, he declared they were more prosing than his aunts' friends, the Goodyers,—and more vulgar than Rosabel's favourites, the Warners!

“What!” said Rosabel, “have you so soon forgotten?—Hubert, are all your feelings so entirely changed with regard to poor Amy?”

“And yours, I presume, Rosabel, with respect to her brother.—He is practising here, with great assiduity and some success; and, I believe, after all, it will be the best catch you can ever make.—I am on my preferment,” added the gay young man, looking with much

self-satisfaction at his gorgeous military dress, which, indeed, well became a figure at once light, and yet tall and commanding.

“ Since Phillip has chosen to injure the family property, I mean to look out for an heiress, of some sort or another—an orientalist,” as Francis Ashbrook says.

“ Ah !” said Rosabel, “ if you have these sentiments, Hubert, Amy has good reason to rejoice at her escape. But you jest only.—Is this Mr. Ashbrook, of whom you speak, any relation of—of our former neighbour, Captain Ashbrook ?”

“ He is first-cousin to that fine, gallant fellow, Captain Edmund Ashbrook, who, however, is the senior, and the son also of Lord Lovaine’s second brother, and, therefore, is the next heir apparent—I wish that was my case—to that old cat, Lady Lovaine.”

“ Oh, Hubert !”

“ Oh, Rosabel ! and how came you to let that same Captain Ashbrook slip out of your fingers ? I am sure he came often enough to Hales Hall ; and you see my father will not listen to any thing of a Warner connection.”—

“ But this Mr. Francis Ashbrook ?—I have heard my Lady Lovaine speak of him, but not very favourably, Hubert. And how is it that he never came to see his cousin, or was never introduced at all into the county ? Has he been abroad ? ”

“ Doubtless ; and there is some feud between the cousins—jealousies. You see, both are heirs, as it were ; and it is quite natural for them to hate each other. Francis must hate Edmund, because Edmund stands between him and the Medlicote estate ; and Edmund must hate Francis, because he knows Francis wishes to stand in his shoes.”

“ Captain Ashbrook,” cried Rosabel, “ is incapable of such meanness—such littleness—” She stopped short, suddenly.

“ Upon my word, Rosa, the discussion has brought the colour into your face. Well—’tis likely enough that Captain Ashbrook will be shot off one of these days, and then my friend will be Lord of Medlicote in perspective. He will have no objection. Like all of us gay young fellows, he likes to have, and to spend, money. Meantime, old Warburton, who was somehow related to Francis’ mother, talks of making him

his heir.—When are you to be introduced to Lady Anna Norman, that piece of perfection? You must hide your diminished head, Rosa, in her presence.”

“ I shall be quite contented to do so. I hear much of Lady Anna. Ah, Hubert! do not forget poor Amy, and fall in love with her—although I fear Papa never, never will consent. And, after all, I do not think you are worthy of Amy.”

“ I do not much imagine that I am,” replied Hubert, looking down, but quickly resuming his wonted self-complacency. “ But, at any rate, if I were, it is quite impossible ever to gain Sir John’s consent in that quarter. So, *n’importe*.”

Rosabel had been about three weeks in London, when Sir John was called away by what he alleged to be sudden business of importance. The law-suit, which has been already mentioned, was decided against him; and the costs were so heavy, and the arrears so overwhelming, that it was found to be necessary for Sir John to remain out of the way for a time, until some compromise had been made with these new creditors. Harassed as he was, he im-

parted to Rosabel and to Hubert only the mildest colouring of the affair ; concealed his worst fears from them ; and, again breaking up the establishment, consigned Rosabel to the care of his friends, Mr. and Mrs. Warburton.

Rosabel was, at first, almost stupified by this event ; but she had learned to seek her consolation in a submission. She was thankful, in the first place, that on this occasion she was no source of trouble to her father, and that he could place her at once where he did. She was thankful that her younger sisters and brother were at school, that Charlotte was married, and that Hubert had his commission. She trusted that a very few weeks would restore her father to her. Hubert took her to Mr. Warburton's house, and left her there. What her feelings then were, those who have been hastily deprived of a home, and thrust upon the hospitality of others, can readily conceive. Hubert, being engaged at a certain hour, left her at the door. She saw the last glimpse of his gay regimentals, for he was prepared for duty, as he turned the corner of the street, with a heart-sickening feeling of desertion, of a nature altogether new to her.



Mr. Warburton was, at first, all kindness and phraseology, and thought he could not do too much for his young charge; every thing Miss Fortescue did, and said, and wore, was perfect; and he seemed to have no trouble in life but to point out her perfections. Mrs. Warburton saw, in her pensive deportment, indications of secret, corroding care; and pitied her the more tenderly, that the scarcely developed loveliness of the fair girl reminded her of the matured beauty of her mother. Depressed herself by the perpetual irritations of Mr. Warburton's temper, Mrs. Warburton well knew that her husband's good-humour would only last a certain time, and that poor Miss Fortescue would be made to feel, before her visit was concluded, the effects of certain untoward circumstances. First, Sir John Fortescue was going, as Mr. Warburton expressed it, fast down hill in the world. Now, Mr. Warburton, like most men who have made their own way, estimated a man's merits by his success; consequently, the unfortunate were always, sooner or later, censured by him. Then, unhappily, poor Sir John had been forced to have recourse to his friend's pecuniary aid; an

occurrence which, in summing up the balance sheet of his merits and defects, made the amount of his virtues vastly greater on the debtor side than on the creditor. And thirdly, after the first effusions of an evanescent generosity were dissipated, Mr. Warburton, who liked to vent his ill-humour upon his wife *ad libitum*, began to find it an annoyance to be obliged to be perpetually well-behaved, with a young lady always by his fire-side, taking Mrs. Warburton's part, which he was sure she did, in her own mind. Then Hubert, with his usual want of discretion, made a great deal too free with the worthy banker's house; came in to dinner whenever he pleased; talked away, and drank a great deal too much wine, in Mr. Warburton's opinion, for a young man who had his own way to make in the world. A few months ago, and all these freedoms would have been thought a great honour; but the wind was changed.

However, every thing went on very well for a few weeks; and Rosabel was fondly counting upon her father's return, when a letter came from him, informing her that it would still be a few weeks longer, or perhaps more, before

## CHAPTER XIII.

*Speed.* Hean—she is proud.

*Lain.* Out with that too: it was Eve's legacy, and cannot be taken from her."

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

THE evening appointed at last arrived, for the tea-party, or rout, as it was then called, in contradistinction, it may be presumed, to a "drum;" the generic appellation, in those days, for a large assembly;—for military names of all sorts were the fashion; and even the colours and articles of dress, had some reference to politics or war.

Mr. Warburton in a "Dauphin's Blush"-coloured coat, new and capacious; his hair powdered and bagged; and a nosegay in his button-hole; moved about the room with a heated face, and bustling, important air, regulating sundry petty disorders which had even crept into the undisturbed region of Mrs. Warburton's drawing room, where never step of

guessed much of his delinquency ; but, fortunately for her own peace of mind, she knew not *all*. She could not but, in a great measure, attribute them to his intimacy with Mr. Francis Ashbrook, with whom Hubert, previous to his sister's arrival in London, had formed one of those rash and violent intimacies which, with young men, pass under the name of friendship. Francis, as Hubert called him, had been of late absent from London, but was expected back daily ; and his return was announced as likely to occur on the evening of a little party which had been arranged by Mr. Warburton for the purpose of introducing their guest, Miss Fortescue, to Lady Anna Norman and her cousin, both of whom claimed kindred with Mr. Francis Ashbrook, by his mother's side. Consequently, as Mr. Warburton observed, there was a connection between Lady Anna's family and his own. " My connections, the Normans," figured, indeed, very frequently in his conversation.

a yard, a neckhandkerchief equally stiff, rising à la *Gorge de Pigeon*, until it touched her chin, and with a large spiked and Vandyked fan in her hand, began in real humility to say:—

“It was your own wish, Mr. Warburton.”

“Well, Mrs. Warburton; what one wishes once, one is not to wish always,” answered Mr. Warburton, petulantly.

“And where do these young gentlemen reside?” enquired Mr. Ashbrook, a young spendthrift of the first fashion, who lounged in an arm chair, and amused himself with teasing with his foot, upon which a brilliant buckle shone, Mrs. Warburton’s dog, her pet companion and friend before Rosabel came.

“Good patience! who knows?” answered Mr. Warburton, gruffly. “From Gothland, no doubt; their father was an old and valued correspondent of mine. A dull man—never could take a joke—was solemnity’s self. Never shall I forget him introducing two gentlemen to each other; the one was named Parks, the other Perks; and the old fellow went through it so gravely—Mr. Parks, Mr. Perks—Mr.

Perks, Mr. Parks,"—He, he, he.—" Nancy, my dear," addressing his wife, " ring ; this fire don't half burn."

" A sedate stock to come from : and what are the hopeful scions ?" asked Mr. Ashbrook. " What profession, or business ?"

" Mr. Clutterbuck, the elder brother," said Mr. Warburton, dryly, " is a lawyer, dull as Blackstone's Commentaries, lengthy as the statutes at large. My opinion is, that he only serves out his ideas to his clients ; he is vastly sparing of them here : not but that he talks ; but then, what are a parcel of idle words ?"

" Vastly true—very good," observed Mr. Ashbrook, affectedly."

" Then comes the clergyman, Mr. Nathaniel, who has not yet found out the art of condensing his ideas. His visits are visitations, indeed ; there he sat, yesterday, two hours to my knowledge, talking upon Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge ; and how he read, and how he studied, and how he relieved his severe application with the bass viol," continued Mr. Warburton, contemptuously. " All very well when one is half asleep."

" And what says your fair ward, or visitor,

to all this?" enquired Mr. Francis Ashbrook, carelessly. "I am quite impatient to see her. I am told by her brother that she's a perfect beauty—not that I believe all Hubert says; but in matters of beauty he is some judge. Is she not visible to-day?"

"I really cannot tell, ladies are so capricious; and Miss Rosabel has a dash of family pride in her. To-day, she has not vouchsafed to dine at all; has she, Nancy? It never was allowed, in my younger days, for young ladies who scarce knew how to conduct themselves, to chuse to remain in their own rooms, whether or no it was agreeable."

"Miss Fortescue is not well," interposed Mrs. Warburton; "she's sadly depressed, poor thing, about her father."

"It were a good thing she were well married," returned Mr. Warburton, sharply; "I shall never get a farthing of that money again, Nancy."

"'Tis no great matter, Mr. Warburton, if you do not," replied his wife, calmly; for it was too large a sum for her to fret about. Her grief on money matters was always on the small scale.

"Surely, if she is so very handsome," said

Mr. Ashbrook, glancing at his rose-coloured waistcoat, embroidered with convolvulus, as he spoke, "I had better propose to her and take the debt upon myself, upon the agreeable expectation of its being one and the same thing, some day." For the wily young man knew that Mr. Warburton was rather flattered than offended by the notion of his being the old gentleman's heir.

"You will have debts enough without that, Francis," returned Mr. Warburton. "I can't get over our cook's forgetting the bread sauce to those pheasants, Nancy; it will annoy me the whole evening."

"Oh! let the pheasants fly away," said Francis; "I am pining to see this beautiful recluse. Has she forsworn all dinners, that she disappointed my eager expectations to-day—does she keep her chamber—she must be in love? Is she ill?—what an affliction!"

"No; she is in the study. She will appear in the evening—she has only a headache," answered Mrs. Warburton.

"The headache! a *nom de guerre* for the heartache—an excuse for ill-humour—a plea



for idleness. I know well what a headache means, and how easily it is cured by a few gentle attentions—certain notes of admiration addressed to the ears of a sullen beauty.”

Mr. Warburton smiled ; for nothing, as his cunning heir well knew, delighted him so much as a fling at the weaker sex, of whom his coarse mind entertained the coarsest notions. “ They are all whimsical enough, God knows,” said he, his self-complacency rising upon the depreciation of others, “ excepting your good cousin, the excellent Lady Anna. She’s a most superior woman, indeed, that ; and would be an honour to any man’s choice. She has, truly, a masculine understanding.”

“ She has, indeed,” replied Mr. Francis Ashbrook ; “ few men can cope with her ; but, for my part, I like something a little less formidable—less of the chevaux-de-frize property about her. Lady Anna is too staid and severe ; erring man has no chance with her—those keen dark eyes penetrate into one’s inmost soul ; and it is not every one that can abide the scrutiny.”

“ No ; not every one, indeed,” said Mrs.

Warburton, shaking her head, as she rose to superintend the lighting of some candles, placed in little filligree, gilt branches, planted against the wall, and admirably adapted to throw all the beams of the candles upon the lugubrious paper.

"A most superior woman," reiterated Mr. Warburton, marching into the back drawing-room, with heavy tread, which shook the apartment; where, in a few minutes, the well-known call to "Nancy," that sound of fear, was heard.

"Something to find fault with!" said Mrs. Warburton, mournfully; and she took a candle, and obeyed his summons.

Meantime, Rosabel sat alone in the library, misnamed a study; since, for the purposes of study, it was seldom used. It was a square, back room, with a high window, which would have admitted to the view, if it had not been rendered opaque half way up, the pleasing prospect of a dead wall, a square of leads, a sort of prison-like, court view; which had never yet been illumined by anything more than twilight. The better sort of books in the library itself were carefully pent up in glazed

cases ; whilst all that was left open to the curious were ponderous ledgers and day-books, of by-gone utility, piled up in dusty grandeur ; a strong box stood in a corner of the room, and a high mercantile desk in the centre. If, by any chance, a volume should, through unwonted carelessness, be left out for casual inspection, it was sure to prove some antiquated directory, or a book of roads, or a complete letter-writer, or something which had reference to gain, and none to amusement. It was therefore wonderful that Rosabel should find relief and pleasure in such a retreat.

Whatever she might formerly have been, she was not now one who would, from selfish indulgence of a morbid sensibility, throw a gloom upon social intercourse, or check the every-day enjoyments of those who were kind to her. She had learned from Mrs. Evelyn, to consider the comfort of others as paramount to her own : and she would not, without some pressing reason, have absented herself from Mrs. Warburton's dinner table. But fresh anxieties had borne down her spirits, and rendered her unable to sustain the composure necessary for society. Her father, in his letter,

of that day's post, spoke despondingly of the prospects of his family. New mortgages were necessary, a rigid economy was enforced, and no mention made of his approaching return. This was sufficiently distressing, for Rosabel now bestowed upon her father an affection the more tender, that she knew him now to depend chiefly upon her for consolation and support. "It is hard, it is very hard," thought she, "that, in his declining years, my father should be harassed in his affairs—impoverished by his sons—he! a man of such honourable feelings, to be reduced to pecuniary obligations. Oh, my father! would that I were a man, that I might aid you—were I Phillip—were I Hubert, would *I* be dependant upon my father's aid, when his means are no longer sufficient to afford that aid?"

Such musings possessed her mind, as in the lonely study she sat, during the time of dinner. Her thoughts then reverted to Captain Ashbrook. "Where was he now—did he even exist?—might he not have fallen among the "brave, who sank to rest" in one of the various services in which the British army had been engaged in the New World. In all pro-

bability he must have been employed in the enterprizes of which the newspapers of the day had brought the accounts, which had been planned by Sir Henry Clinton, and executed by General Vaughan, for the capture of certain forts in Hudson's river. Those forts were now possessed by British soldiers. Was he among the fortunate who had escaped to reap the laurels, or had he fallen? An insatiable desire to know at least his destiny took possession of her;—to learn if they might ever meet again. She longed to look into the book of destiny, though its pages should unfold nothing but sorrow. She strove to fancy what had passed in his mind since they parted. If he had divined her reasons—if his disappointment had softened his heart, and brought him to a sense of his iniquities. It was strange, but, in spite of conviction, she could not associate Captain Ashbrook—the brave, the lofty, the open—with deeds of meanness and of selfishness. They were so unlike him. He seemed to have two natures—the one pure, and good, and generous; the other, deceptive and depraved.—Alas! the story of Mary was not a subject of doubt. She had witnessed—she had

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wept over that sad history herself—it was no hearsay intelligence which had condemned him.

It was whilst she sat, and mused, and tried in vain to work or read, that a door opened softly behind her. At first she heeded it not; but turning round, in a few seconds, she saw, in the dusk, a face, a figure which personified the subject of her thoughts. She sat fixed, gasping, gazing at the intruder. The countenance she looked upon was, and was not, like Captain Ashbrook. The gentleman, whoever he was, bowed low; and quietly, as he had entered, retired and closed the door.

Rosabel, in a short time, recovered her composure. It must be Mr. Francis Ashbrook whom she had seen. Oh, how she longed to see that face again! What associations of happiness, and yet of pain, it had presented! She sat down, and put her hand before her eyes, to retrace the image which it had partially called up to her recollection; but other images presented themselves instead. She thought—a sort of sickness coming over her—of Mary, her patience, her hopelessness, her longing for repose—for the repose which obliterates the pangs of

memory. The sight of the father occurred to her : his subdued grief was more affecting than impassioned distress. Long would he miss Mary in her home, in her garden, in the fields where she was wont to meet him ! Then she remembered the brother—but reflection was intolerable to her. She rose, and, sighing, went to her own room to attend to those duties of the toilet in which she no longer felt any interest. The pleasures of dress were now a dead letter to her ; its details, its frivolities, revolted her.

At length she was prepared to descend to the drawing room ; a place had been reserved for her by Mrs. Warburton, who sat behind a silver tea-urn, whilst a little black foot-boy held a waiter, with muffins and cakes upon it, in the centre of the large and formal circle. Lady Anna Norman was arrived, and properly placed : this was to be her first introduction to Rosabel. Lady Anna was a woman of about twenty-four years of age, but looked decidedly older. Her figure was commanding, without being critically elegant ; and her countenance, though not entitled to the word beautiful, possessed many charms. These were the charms of expression chiefly ; yet that expression was

rather thoughtful than varied, and was sometimes even deemed forbidding, except when a smile, replete with benevolence, or a laugh, full of mirth, illumined the face of Lady Anna, as a gleam of sunshine on a wintry day. Her finely-marked brow was so indicative of intelligence, her teeth were so beautiful, her voice so soft and winning, that Lady Anna, independant of her moral qualities, must have been an object of admiration to the sex most prone to over-value such advantages: by her own sex she was highly estimated.

The intellect of Lady Anna was of a character rather strong than brilliant, and her good qualities more useful than attractive. The most striking feature of her character was its sense of justice, a quality from which the sincerity which eminently distinguished it had its origin. Sincerity, in Lady Anna, seemed to be a necessity of her nature rather than a principle; the choice between falsehood and truth never appeared to occur to her: in this respect she was above temptation. The specious, the self-righteous, and the designing, feared her; the weak and vain, at least those who were merely so, respected her; the gentle, the con-



scientious, the gay, the humble, the pious—in short, the good of every different temperament, loved and respected her both. To foibles and weaknesses merely, she was, perhaps, too indulgent ; nor did she intimidate the artful and perfidious by any other means than her own sincerity of conduct, which cast upon them a tacit reproach. Till now, Lady Anna had lived unmarried, and, perhaps, unsolicited : at least, the world knew not of her conquests. She lived for others ; no one admired youth, and loveliness, and accomplishments, and vivacity, more than she did ; no one promoted more that lightness of heart which the young and lovely may feel innocently, and impart delightfully ; the pangs of envy, corroding as the tooth-ache, and usually as little pitied, were unfelt by her. It had, however, been of late a current report, that Lady Anna and her cousin, Mr. Eustace Norman, looked kindly on each other. Nothing could, it was thought, be more congenial than their characters : they were both a little serious, very philanthropic, rigidly just in all their dealings, fond of the country, indifferent to amusement. Lady Anna was, it is true, a year or two older than Eustace ; but his early steadiness

of disposition, and extreme love of study, would, it was thought, equalize that matter. Both were well endowed in worldly prospects: Lady Anna was the only child of the elder branch of the family, to whose hereditary honours Eustace was heir-presumptive; here was; therefore, another reason why an union should be contemplated. To close this digression, and to return to Mrs. Warburton's tea-table :—

Her Ladyship was placed in the seat of honour before Rosabel entered—in those formal days, at the top of the room, next to Mr. Warburton, who sat by her in full-blown importance; the two Mr. Clutterbucks came next, each with a tea-cup in his hand. Mr. Francis Ashbrook languidly entertained the third, looking every moment at the door; for his glimpse of Rosabel had stimulated, not satisfied, his curiosity. After, came a distant, humble relation, half chaperon, half companion, of Lady Anna; by whom sat a serious, but elegant-looking, very young man, dressed in the richest but gravest costume of the day, Mr. Eustace Norman.

Such was the arrangement; whilst, other

subjects being few, the conversation turned upon persons. Whilst Eustace Norman and the Reverend Mr. Clutterbuck talked of senior optimists, wranglers, and scholars, and the Mr. Clutterbucks descanted on the last new play, Mr. Warburton had sought to entertain Lady Anna with a dissertation on Miss Fortescue's faults, and the conversation which preceded her entrance was of this description :—

“ Miss Fortescue is never ready,” said he, impatiently, addressing Lady Anna ; “ it was but yesterday that I hinted to her that one of the greatest faults in my eyes was procrastination ; don't you think so, Lady Anna ? ”

“ A very great fault indeed ;—that is, a very bad habit,” returned Lady Anna.

“ Bless my soul ! if you but knew her,” said Mr. Warburton, talking confidentially in a suppressed tone—“ if you but knew her ! your Ladyship would not believe, so well conducted as you are yourself, what thoughtless habits this young creature, for a young lady of her condition, has indulged in ; or rather, in what thoughtless habits she has been indulged.”—

“ Yes, indeed,” interposed Mrs. Warburton, softly, “ it is not her fault, poor girl.”—

"Her extravagance beats every thing, Lady Anna, that you can conceive, and is only eclipsed by her carelessness."

He paused for some note of admiration from Lady Anna, but, receiving nothing but a cool, dispassionate "very likely," he went on.

"Here's my Nancy, you see, who takes her part in common, even begins to find that she has some faults; and you see it's no easy or pleasant task to Mrs. Warburton and myself to correct her faults, seeing that her father and mother were our very particular friends.

"Were they, indeed!" said Lady Anna, with genuine astonishment. "I am surprised then you should think about them."

"Your Ladyship may well be surprised," resumed Mr. Warburton, "more especially when I tell you," lowering his voice, "also, that I am likely to be a loser by Sir John, to the amount of five hundred pounds."

"Poor man!" said Lady Anna. "It was well it was no more."

"Quite enough to lose by a friend at any time. I see you agree with me, Lady Anna; but Sir John's a particular good friend of mine. He's a ruined man, as you know."

He was interrupted by the abrupt entrance of Rosabel herself into the drawing room.

Of this event Lady Anna was first apprized by the startled air of her cousin Eustace ; for Mr. Warburton's portly figure, by no means a transparency, stood between her and his young guest. Lady Anna further observed the glance of surprise, and she thought of lively admiration, painted on the countenance of young Norman ; and she leaned forwards, impatient to see the object which had excited these sentiments. Rosabel, as she advanced into the circle, appeared to Lady Anna to be about nineteen years of age, at the least. She was, in fact, of an appearance more womanly than her actual age ; though her dress and demeanour were alike at variance with her stature, and with the general outline of her figure. Perhaps, the circumstances in which she was placed, and the recent details Lady Anna had received from Mr. Warburton, aided in inspiring her Ladyship with an interest which she scarcely ever experienced at first acquaintances.

Rosabel was, first, formally introduced to Lady Anna. Mr. Francis Ashbrook was then

conducted across the circle to be presented to her. The general outline of his features again reminded her of Captain Ashbrook; the sound of his voice still more forcibly recalled the recollection. But here the similitude ceased. The eye was cunning, not thoughtful; the smile sarcastic, not benevolent; the manners, habitually polite and well practised, but artificial, and not displaying that species of good-breeding, which has been well defined by a great man "benevolence in trifles;" and which, whilst it springs from the heart, is likewise maintained by habit, and sits easy on its possessor, like a well-made garment.

Rosabel, though not unmoved by the sight of Mr. Francis Ashbrook, and sensible that Lady Anna, too, was an acquaintance of Captain Ashbrook's, began by degrees to feel interested in them on their own account. Lady Anna appeared to her to be an individual such as she had never yet encountered: intelligent;—exalted in person and mind; gracious, yet commanding; unassuming, yet with a consciousness of mental power. These qualities in woman were new to Rosabel.

There was a levity, a freedom, in Mr.

Ashbrook's manner to females, and an undisguised admiration, rather offensive than pleasing, characterized his behaviour to Rosabel, as he sat down beside her and prepared to enter into conversation with her. Of course, young ladies in those days were not supposed to enter into more intricate discourse than flippant strictures upon persons or dress — the more spiced with satire or scandal, the better.

"You are not acquainted with Lady Anna," Mr. Ashbrook began, in a whisper so familiar that Rosabel started. "What do you think of her—very formidable, is she not? No? but then you have not the misfortune to be a sinner like me."

"You will be delighted with the Mr. Clutterbucks. 'Such safe, neighbourly young men,' as Mrs. Warburton says: live only three doors off. To be dressed and prepared at any time, upon the shortest possible notice, either for a party or for matrimony. Do not be distressed; they will not hear us. Look unconscious—that is the secret. What a fine fellow your brother is, Miss Fortescue; and how London has improved him—do you not think so? No! then what species of person do you approve of?"

There is my cousin Eustace—what do you think of him?—have you conned him over?”

Rosabel acknowledged she had looked at him. She was, in fact, interested by his appearance. It was that of a studious and grave man; though in the bloom of youth, and in the perfection of manly grace and matured strength. She thought he must be a person to be valued, and she could not, had she known his worth, have valued him too highly. Brought up by a discerning and affectionate mother, for he had lost his father, she had early not only impressed him with religious principles, but had used her undivided influence over his mind to cultivate in him domestic habits, and to inspire him with a taste for those intellectual resources which she knew constituted, next to religion, man's best resource against dissipation. She had brought him to consider, that he did not fulfil his station in society as a man of fortune, adequately, if he did not seek to adorn it by his acquirements, as well as by his example as a moral man. Hence, Mr. Norman had hitherto not only passed through the period of his youth blamelessly, but had gained many distinctions in his schol-



lastic career; which had not served to inflate so well-poised a mind with pride, whilst they had stimulated it with a thirst for future public honours. And this desire of an honourable and lasting fame was at present his ruling bias—the spring of all his actions.

Mr. Ashbrook saw that he could not induce Miss Fortescue to join in any sarcasms against his cousins; so he returned to the Mr. Clutterbucks. “You have seen them before,” he said. “Do not be distressed; I have no apprehensions of any peculiar interest. Now, if you have any country cousins who want a beau to conduct them to Ranelagh, or the play, or any public places, they are inimitable escorts; and one or other of them is sure to be disengaged. You have found that out, have you? And they are also famous for sending the ladies home heart-whole; and you have found that out too? But see they are moving into the next room—to music. Now you *will* be enchanted!”

A general movement, of which, though harmony was the avowed motive, confusion was the immediate result, was indeed taking place; Rosabel moving with the rest to the ex-

tremity of a large, gloomy back room, to which the company now proceeded, observed that Mr. Warburton was leading, with much form, Lady Anna towards the venerable harpsichord, which stood in one corner of an apartment but seldom used; for, to Mrs. Warburton's mind, the notion of occupying two drawing rooms never, in the whole experience of her life, occurred. She looked with astonishment at Mr. Warburton, as she saw him open one of those folding doors which separated the two rooms; forming the barrier between light and darkness, warmth and cold, society and solitude. There, to Mrs. Warburton's surprise, she found three additional instruments arranged; for the Mr. Clutterbucks were all musical, or, at least, all performers.

"This is quite a pleasant surprise," said Mr. Ashbrook, shivering, nevertheless, as he entered, and plunged into the recesses of what looked very like the Cave of Despair.

"A little music is so cheerful!" he added, casting an affectionate look back at the fire in the next room.

"Yes! I did not discover, till half-an-hour before tea, that my friends the Mr. Clutterbucks

were all able performers; and, what is more, both able and willing."

"How very for—tunate," said Ashbrook, with a slight bow of recognition general to the three accomplished brothers.

"We make a noise at any rate—he, he, he!" said Mr. Clutterbuck, senior.

"I dare—say—," said Mr. Ashbrook, with a sly glance at Lady Anna, who was leaning over some music books.

"It is so delightful," observed Lady Anna, with a look half reproving, half merry, "when a family can join in concert together. It often produces real harmony. Ashbrook, do come and assist me here," she added, in a quick tone, a little displeased with the calm, audacious, half-satirical look with which he fixed his eyes upon her.

"Why, yes!" exclaimed Mr. Warburton, who always agreed with Lady Anna. "There's my old friend Mrs. Anderson, who has five daughters, and they *all* play; and there's Miss Fortescue who can play; but she has been accustomed, Lady Anna, to the new make of instruments—what you call your piano-fortes—some new-fangled foreign thing;—and this instru-

ment, which was good enough for Mrs. Warburton all her life, is not good enough for her ; and Mrs. Warburton was a great performer in her day."

Lady Anna made no other comment than a benevolent smile and glance at Rosabel, and the simple exclamation, "Indeed!"

"Lady Anna, you will find nothing here that you can play. Nothing newer than His Majesty's Coronation Anthem," said Mr. Francis Ashbrook to her.

"Is Miss Fortescue any connection of the Warburton family, that she is here, Francis?" asked Lady Anna, as she turned over the music book.

"No; only a visitor for a time, I presume; or perhaps an *enfant trouvée* of Mr. Warburton's. No relation to Mrs. Warburton, however."

"Nonsense, Francis; you cannot deceive me — I know who she is perfectly; but I fancied it strange that Sir John Fortescue should leave her here."

"It is strange, surely," said Mr. Norman, leaning over his cousin's shoulder and speaking in a low voice.

"Why, yes," replied Mr. Ashbrook. "Can

"I don't like to be so—just a few things; but I don't like to quarrel with Mrs. Warburton. I have no quarrel with her."

"What do you think of the Federal Mr. Ashurst?" said the Federalist.

"I don't like him," said the Federalist. "I don't like Mr. Ashurst. He is a man of the most recent complexion. He is a man of the most recent complexion. He is a man of the most recent complexion. He is a man of the most recent complexion."

"But you will," said Lady Anna, in a soft, whispering tone, as she still turned over the leaves of the book, "what is your opinion of Miss Fortescue? Now, Francis, I never will forgive you, if you tarnish the beautiful purity of that girl's mind by what you call your little innocent attentions; or take advantage of her father's absence to insinuate yourself into her favour."

"My dear Lady Anna, you don't suppose that in this house I dared! I must be of the gnome tribe if I can escape the lynx eyes of Mrs. Warburton. Besides, I am a reformed character in those respects. You don't know me—you don't, indeed, Lady Anna; I could not think of such a thing."

“ If you do,” said Lady Anna, in a threatening accent, “ you shall have no quarter from me, Francis. You are not to be trusted,” she added, very seriously, as she sat down to the harpsichord.

This was the signal for a general tuning and preluding. Mr. Clutterbuck caused the strings of a bass-viol to groan ; his Reverend brother laboured at a violin ; whilst the youngest of the fraternity blew into a flute, screwing and unscrewing, and declaring he knew not what had happened to the instrument, and distorting his juvenile physiognomy with many contortions, until all was ready. Then, after a general plunge, the merits of the harpsichord became disclosed ; its tones were cruelly powerful, and, accompanied with that peculiar, harsh, and lack-a-daisical chord which characterized such instruments, was almost insupportable, even to accustomed ears. Lady Anna played well ; and she was superior to the vanity and pettishness which often leads people to declare that they cannot perform upon certain instruments ; neither was she sufficiently anxious that her performance should be highly applauded, to be very disconsolate upon the present occasion. She

found it somewhat difficult, however, to retain her gravity as the concerto proceeded. The bass-viol was low to the last degree; it was like an emanation from the tortures of some spirit in the situation of Hamlet's Ghost; the violin was proportionally scratchy and scrappy, and might be compared to the far-off wailing of a child: whilst every one must acknowledge that the failure in tone proceeded, not from lack of exertion in the performer, whose arms, head, and shoulders worked away, as if he had been bitten by a tarantula. But the flute was truly melancholy: the querulous, tremulous notes of the violin might be allowed to have some arrangement and science, even in their languid melody; but the flute was all in flats; and the Captain, being but a tyro, was obliged to be perpetually set right in his place by Lady Anna, who gently pointed onwards, frequently a few bars, by the space of which he was distanced, until he gave up the harmonious contest, and the notes died away in hollow murmurings. Lady Anna went through the whole, however, with admirable patience, until, at last, after hovering a long time about its close, like an ill-constructed sermon, the concerto was concluded.

“A most animated performance!” exclaimed Ashworth, with well-preserved gravity; “really I had no expectation of such a treat!”

“Bravo!” cried Mr. Warburton; “and I am happy to find that Lady Anna can play upon an old instrument. I value it the more that Mrs. Warburton had it at the time of her marriage, poor thing!—concerned to hear, the other day, that it was not good enough for Miss Fortescue—ahem!—You have heard, Lady Anna,” lowering his tone, “how involved poor Sir John is—obliged to mortgage one estate, and to give up another left him by a distant relation, some ten or fifteen years ago, to the actual heir at law;—forced to pay arrears—don’t suppose he will ever hold up his head again—sorry for it—a particular friend of mine, Lady Anna.”

“Yes—I have heard,” said Lady Anna, quickly, turning her head away.

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Mr. Norman, in a low tone—for he had heard the intelligence—“What a shame!—I mean, what a pity!—so old a family too—so respectable a man!”

“And so beautiful a daughter!” added Lady Anna, smiling, and blushing a little.



“Compassion melts the soul to love wonderfully soon, even in this cold weather,” said young Ashbrook;—“I find myself quite in for it, and have no doubt it will be reciprocal.”

“Till she knows you,” said Lady Anna, emphatically.

“How wretchedly melancholy the town is!” resumed Mr. Ashbrook, addressing the youngest of the Clutterbuck fraternity; “every one in your line, sir!—all war—no diversions—no galas—no routs!”

“As Mrs. Montague remarked, some forty years ago, at the time of the rebellion,” said Lady Anna, “she wished the gay world had its peace, its vanities—that, ‘by the word drum, was to be understood only a polite assembly; and by a rout, only an engagement of hoop-petticoats.’”

“A pretty creature that Mrs. Montague—and a vast talker,” said Mr. Warburton, “as I understand, still.”

“And likely to be for the next ten years, I make no doubt,” observed Mr. Ashbrook. “Of all things, commend me to a *bas bleu* for long living; having wearied her husband and half her acquaintance into her grave, the old lady is

sure to live on ; those cold-blooded, reasoning women last for ever—like a dull-coloured silk, which never wears out.

“ It must be rather sad,” remarked Lady Anna, “ to hear the old lady descant upon the *beau monde* of her early days. To listen to her descriptions of the balls, the burlettas, and operas of her youth—and to reflect that most who figured in those gay assemblies are sunk, not only to rest, but into oblivion.”

“ Which is much worse,” said Eustace.

“ And it proves,” continued Lady Anna, “ that even the highest classes must have something more than mere external show to entitle them to any distinction not merely ephemeral ; something beyond the splendour of rank to make them, in the true sense, great. I wonder that our young men of condition do not affect science, or literature, or become patrons of art—or dabblers even in poetry : anything to raise them above mere dangles about court—”

—“ Or even admirers of pretty women,” interrupted Francis.

“ Much depends upon the reigning sove-

reign," said Eustace, "and on the freedom of the country from political ferment and excitement. I believe I may be fully borne out in saying, that our nobility are much degenerated in the character of their pursuits and acquirements since the days of Elizabeth ;—who wisely required her courtiers to be distinguished by something more than the name they chanced to bear, or the honours made for them by their ancestors. But since the Hanoverian succession, hitherto, it is remarkable that the spirit of improvement has decreased among the higher orders."

"It will revive again, perhaps," observed Lady Anna ; "yet 'tis strange there is scarce a poet of the present day we can bear to read."

"Whilst the drama keeps up its reputation," said Mr. Norman, "we need never despair of general literature."

"How edifying," whispered Mr. Ashbrook, to Rosabel. This is almost worse than the concerto. You will take some Frontiniae ?—now, I think, if we had but a few of Mr. Warburton's jokes, and a fantasia on the harpsichord from Mrs. Warburton, our night's en-

tainment would be complete. You are thoughtful—

“ My heart’s in the Highlands, my heart is not here ;  
My heart’s in the Highland a hunting the deer.”

You know my cousin Ashbrook, do you not ? A very fearless young gentleman, and as likely to be shot off as any one I know.”

Rosabel started.

“ You know that old song, do you not, Miss Fortescue ?” pursued Francis, carelessly, but secretly perusing the variations of her countenance :—

“ Here’s a health to those far away,  
Who are gone to the war’s fatal plain ;  
Here’s a health to those who were here t’other day,—  
And ne’er shall be with us again—  
No, never.”

And he sang out the stave in a voice soft, and rich, and cultivated.

“ Now do join me in a glass of Tokay to Edmund Ashbrook’s safe return.” For the wily Francis had gleaned from Hubert, in his unguarded moments, that there had once been a rumour or surmise of a marriage between Captain Ashbrook and his sister Rosabel ; and

Mr. Ashbrook was deeply interested in the truth or falsehood of this report.

The appearance of Tokay and Frontiniac was the signal for the Mr. Clutterbucks to be busy, and for Mr. Warburton to be offensive and officious. And, in the midst of their gallantries, Lady Anna Norman's carriage was announced, and the party broke up.

## CHAPTER XIV.

" My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.  
My father's loss, the weakness which I feel,  
The wreck of all my friends."

SHAKSPEARE.

ROSABEL was sitting, in the afternoon of the following day, musing at the front window, when her brother Hubert entered. She was relieved by this occurrence from a long train of melancholy reveries, which had been but little distracted by the scene upon which she had almost unconsciously looked. It was a rainy Sunday. Mr. Warburton's house was situated in Hart Street, Bloomsbury, opposite that church, on the summit of which George the Third figures aloft, unmoved by the tumults of carts, drays, and charity children below. Rosabel often, in her thoughtful moods, fixed her eyes, more in absence than in loyalty, upon this figure; but, this afternoon, her eyes had rested, for want of better objects, upon a train

of little green-coated charity children, turning into the sacred edifice, like so many little automats; and, at times, ejected from the house of prayer at the pleasure of the merciless beadle—that functionary, with whose beck and staff poor children become early acquainted. Rosabel’s countenance was more than usually sad; for, whilst this little scene had passed before her, as in a pantomime, her thoughts had reverted to home, to Southwell, to Mellicote, even to Ashbrook. The rain pelted down upon the pavement; scarcely a passenger varied the prospect in the street: it was, therefore, with more than usual delight that Rosabel hailed a knock at the door.

“Rosabel,” said Hubert, “who do you think are arrived in town—and they bade me fetch you?—Mr. and Mrs. Spooner, as wise as ever. My sister and my sister’s son—for they have brought something of a child with them; but, whether it’s a girl or a boy, really I have forgotten. But, come; can you get yourself ready in less than an hour?”

“Oh! decidedly—how delightful!—Have they heard from my father?—and what is the baby like?”

“ Why, it is a very human-looking thing, considering. I always thought that babies were something too horrid to be looked at ; but this is, really, less infernal than usual. It has got, as far as I could see—for it sleeps eternally—its sweet papa’s eyes, blue, like the blue on a china tea-cup ; and its delightful mama’s something or other—so says that angelic being, Aunt Waldegrave—she’s here ; which is the very deuce.”

“ But, oh ! how delightful to see Charlotte—or any body—and how long do they stay ?”

“ Happily, only a week ; and that’s the best part of it. And old Mrs. Spooner is with them, telling one for ever that they are such a happy couple ; and advising every one to marry,—a style of conversation, not over agreeable.”

“ No, indeed.”

“ What a mercy it is that old Warburton’s out. The old lady, as usual, is saying her prayers. The Spooners are quite shocked at your being here—as Mrs. Waldegrave says, such a strange place for *Miss Fortescue* to be in !”

“ Indeed,” said Rosabel, disconsolately, “ it



signifies very little where I am. I wish Sir John had allowed me to go with him."

"I wish so too," returned Hubert; "for it is a confounded plague to have sisters to see to in London, and one that's so dismal too. I cannot think what's come to you of late, Rosa."

"Oh," said Rosabel, "I shall be—quite happy,"—she was going to say, but she altered the expression, and said, "quite well when papa comes back."

"Ah, well; come then—yes; that's right—leave a note, and say you are going out to dinner. The Spooners will be punctual to four o'clock."

Rosabel finished her toilette, and accompanied her brother to the hotel where Mr. and Mrs. Spooner had taken up their abode.

"Miss Fortescue in a hackney coach!" exclaimed Mrs. Waldegrave, as Rosabel with her brother entered the sitting-room. This was her greeting, after an absence of some months. Charlotte, who had been confined since Rosabel had seen her, came forward more affectionately.

"My dearest sister!" cried Rosabel; overcome with joy—"my dearest Charlotte!"

"She is, indeed, all our dearest Charlotte," said old Mrs. Spooner, complacently—"such a wife!—such a mother!—"

"Never was there such a happy couple," interrupted Mrs. Waldegrave—"such patterns of propriety and excellence."

A group remained collected round some object of curiosity and interest, and a being with a long tail, as Hubert called it, was presently brought forward to its Aunt Rosabel, to be duly, and what is more difficult, in baby cases, to be discriminatingly admired.

"Whom do you think it like?" asked Mrs. Spooner, with a face of as much solicitude as if the welfare of nations depended upon the resemblance.

"It has the Spooner eye," said Mrs. Waldegrave; wishing to be complimentary, as the little unconscious creature half opened an orb, and, kitten-like, sank into repose again.

"It is a thousand pities it is asleep," said Charlotte; "how provoking! It has been awake till now," she added, earnestly.

Rosabel received the intelligence with much composure. "It is awake sometimes, I suppose?" she said, kissing the fair, soft arm of

the infant, and looking kindly at her sister ; happy beyond expression to see Charlotte so happy.

“ Oh, dear—yes !” cried old Mrs. Spooner, “ and there never was such a noticing child, I assure you. It is wonderful the observations it makes, when most babies can’t see at this age !”

“ I think its cap-border the best part of it,” observed Hubert.—“ By-the-bye, Rosa, what a figure Lady Anna dresses. I could not come to old Warburton’s last light, for I was at the Tower.—And then there is that queer old animal, Mrs. Prunell, who was here when I called to-day.”

“ Mrs. Spooner’s most particular friend !” exclaimed Mrs. Waldegrave, quite in alarm.—

“ Let him say on, dear Mrs. Waldegrave,” said Mrs. Spooner, good-temperedly, “ young people will have their joke, you know.”

“ And we cannot expect every one to be like my dearest Augustus,” remarked Charlotte, looking at her husband as he left the room, and was supposed to be out of hearing. “ He is quite a pattern ; isn’t he, Aunt Waldegrave ?”

“ Such a devoted husband !” exclaimed Mrs. Waldegrave.

“ Never was there such a husband !” echoed Aunt Alice.

In such gentle dialogue was the day consumed. Rosabel was rejoiced to find that Charlotte was not fully aware of her father’s difficulties, or, at any rate, chose to be ignorant of them. Mr. Spooner was a kind-hearted and even liberal young man, who could not have borne the idea of any pecuniary distress, which he could have obviated, existing in the family of his wife ; but Rosabel well knew how much it would add to the annoyances which her father felt, to learn that Mr. and Mrs. Spooner were made a party to them. She kept her own counsel, therefore, and accepted, with gratitude, an invitation from Mrs. Spooner and her sister to pass with them the week that they were to remain in London.

It was like most visitations of country families in London, a week of toil. Persons, who visit the metropolis for business, or even for pleasure, may well find fault with London. No species of labourer can undergo more bodily and mental fatigue than these occasional visitants :—

Panoramas and picture galleries all the morning; the park, and morning calls, in the afternoon; dinner hastily despatched, that they may see, with aching heads, the inside of every theatre in London; a late breakfast, hurried over the next day, to be ready for a review or an auction; then a day of shopping: the poor husband worn out of all patience, and dreading ever more the aspect of a bonnet, or the rustling of a silk; meantime, high accounts running on at an expensive hotel, perhaps, or in those dens of misery, London Lodgings.—No one, who has witnessed the quiet, happy country gentry, in their clean, airy country seats, could imagine how changed they are during their three weeks pleasure in London.—So flushed, so bustled, so tired, so irritable, so bilious, and so nervous. With serene nature around them, and neither shops nor theatres within some miles' distance, no wonder that they tell you that they cannot endure London, that they are never well in it, and can neither eat nor breathe. I can readily believe them; and can easily suppose, that were those who reside in it to labour at the oar one day, as their country cousins do for some weeks,

they would presently become, by choice, country cousins also.

Rosabel began to think the metropolis more disagreeable than she had ever yet considered it. Charlotte and Mr. Spooner were always setting out, always coming in, always tired, harassed with their intended purchases, regretting their past ones: added to these sources of disquietude, there was an implacable baby to be attended to, whose sleeping and whose eating interfered with every amusement, and were as important as the opera or the theatre; then there were Mrs. Waldegrave's punctilios and her prejudices of gentility and non-gentility, which often came in the way of enjoyment. There were so many scruples, as to going there and being seen here; and, after all, the whole party passed tolerably unnoticed, and might have gone to the moon and back without their next neighbours knowing it. And, in process of time, young Mrs. Spooner began to find, to her infinite amazement, that she and Mr. Spooner were persons of no importance in London, and that it would require time, and residence, and a revival of connection, and a certain style of entertainment, even for *them* to get into that

circle of fashion or of rank to which they deemed themselves entitled. So they departed, Mrs. Waldegrave inclusive, with the conviction on their minds that the country was the only place for happiness, and that London was disagreeable, unwholesome, dirty, and vulgar.

Rosabel, of course, returned to Mr. Warburton's house, in Hart Street, Bloomsbury. She went with her maid, whom she had retained by her father's wish; nor could she, as she drove through the streets, avoid anticipating, with dread, Mr. Warburton, his jocularities and particularities, his gout and his grievances, his long naps, and his crossness when awaking; nor could she help longing even for her father's silence, and absence from all littleness, and from undignified jocularities, which marked Sir John's deportment. What a shock awaited her when she arrived in Hart Street! The shutters of the house were closed, and a servant, on seeing the coach, ran out to tell her what had occurred. Mrs. Warburton had died very suddenly the previous night. There had not been time to apprize Miss Fortescue.—The servant hoped she would excuse it; and he would step up and apprize Mr. Warburton of her arrival.

Rosabel was inexpressibly shocked by this event; she called to mind the never-varying kindness, the mild, consistent advice, the conscientious example, the forbearance, the real unostentatious liberality which had marked Mrs. Warburton's conduct towards herself, and her heart smote her that she had not duly appreciated these traits of character when their possessor was alive and could be sensible to gratitude and affection. Awestruck and mournful, she walked up the spacious, old-fashioned staircase, and entered the drawing-room, where she expected to see Mr. Warburton, or, perhaps, Mr. Ashbrook. It was empty, and a stillness, heightened in gloom by the decline of an autumnal day, reigned in the large dark apartment, the remote corners of which were scarcely lighted by the narrow, high windows which looked into the street. Rosabel started back, as the whole train of associations with Mrs. Warburton crowded into her mind. The door was closed behind her, and not even that sound disturbed the fixed, yet momentary reverie into which impressions of awe, rather than feelings of grief, betrayed her. She stood, transfixed,



as it were, to the spot where she had first rested ; images of pain, and suffering, and death, coming across her ; she wondered at her own frequent levity of thought ; the simple idea, “ my friend is no longer here,” “ she was here when I left her,” came home to her with solemn conviction ; she started, and almost screamed, when the door was opened suddenly behind her.

“ I beg your pardon,” was said, in a low voice ; “ shall I disturb you, if I remain here ?”

“ Oh, no !” replied Rosabel, hastily, her spirits quite upset by the circumstance of any one addressing her ; for she had wound herself up for a scene with Mr. Warburton, which she thought she could have borne ; but the stillness, the deserted air of the house, disconcerted all her expectations of her own fortitude. She stood, therefore, unable to command herself sufficiently to look round at Mr. Eustace Norman, the individual who had spoken.

“ Mr. Warburton has borne his loss with great fortitude,” said the young intruder, after a few minutes’ pause—“ Will you not sit down ? I am sure you are very much shocked !” he added, quickly, gently leading

Miss Fortescue to a chair, which was placed near the fire.

"He has really borne it wonderfully, considering the extreme suddenness of the event. Mrs. Warburton was quite well last night at eight; at nine, complained of an oppression about the heart, and expired in a few seconds."

"She was well prepared."

"She was; and, perhaps, considering all things, it may be deemed a happy release. She and Mr. Warburton were an ill-assorted pair, I should think—'matched, not suited.'"

"She was so patient—so enduring—so good," said Rosabel.—"Next to my Aunt Evelyn—but," stopping short, "I forgot you are a stranger to my family."

"Not entirely, now—not by report.—What were you going to say?" persisted Mr. Norman, in a tone more than polite—kind and soothing.

"I have an aunt," replied Rosabel, sighing deeply, "as good as Mrs. Warburton was—and happier—for poor Mrs. Warburton was not happy; and I merely meant to say—but forgot at the instant that you were a stranger to me and my concerns—I meant to say, that

in their maternal kindness to me they were alike." The tears stood in her eyes as she spoke.

"That was a delightful trait certainly," said Mr. Norman, growing more and more interested in his companion: and he grieved that the interview was not longer protracted; for it was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Warburton.

He bustled into the room, his hair by no means in tight curl, or strict powder—a dishevelment suitable to the first days of widowhood,—and, without waiting for enquiries or sympathy, he deposited his ponderous form in an arm chair, saying, in anticipation of all condolences—

"Why very poorly indeed, my dear—extremely unwell—as might have been expected. Don't rally at all—can't rally—can't get on at all."

"I am very sorry," replied Rosabel, who had risen at his entrance, sitting down again, and putting her handkerchief to her eyes. Her grief was but a gentle shower at first; but it soon thickened almost into a tempest of sorrow.

"Don't take on so, Miss Fortescue; it is wrong to fret: what have you lost, in com-

parison with me? I am the person to be pitied, Miss Rosabel," said Mr. Warburton, as he sat bolt upright, looking almost angry with her for grieving. "A poor bereaved man. We must submit to these things, my dear—my dear lamented Mrs. W. used herself to say so; though I confess I am quite inconsolable, quite!"

He applied the corner of his handkerchief to his eyes, and with some success; for a tear did absolutely start forth: it was the attitude of grief at any rate.

"And then," pursued Mr. Warburton, "any thing that is distressing brings back, for a certainty, my old stomach complaint: I have such a weight and uneasiness here," he added, putting his hand to his side. "Could not eat a thing to-day at dinner, Mr. Norman, as you must have observed—my dear Nancy, lying above stairs in the state she is." Poor Nancy was fond of salmon; and for her sake I took a bit of that, and I pecked at a bit of chicken, Miss Fortescue,—sent that away—then I had a bit of lamb, and that wouldn't do; and nothing could I fancy but a wing of levret, though it came from Mr. Ashbrook on purpose for poor Mrs.

Warburton, but arrived too late—heigho! She always had a particular good sauce of her own to it—poor woman!”

“This specimen of the bathos seems to be the most effectual way of curing Miss Fortescue’s grief,” thought Mr. Norman, as he glanced at the downcast form and features of Rosabel; on whose face a settled calm again prevailed.

“Mr. Norman,” resumed Mr. Warburton, in an exalted voice, “as you are a relative, or, at least, connection of my own, and a man of family and honour, it may be as well in your presence to state my plans for Miss Fortescue:—being now, most unfortunately, reduced to the condition of a single man, it will not be proper, my dear, that you should continue here: your worthy father would, indeed, call me to a severe account, if I permitted such a thing for a single day. No—propriety is propriety, and decorum decorum. No one more decorous than my poor Mrs. Warburton—a woman of such respectability! She’s gone now!”

“I cannot understand,” said Rosabel, much confused, and somewhat haughtily.

“It would not be becoming, Miss Fortescue,

to enter into an explanation upon delicate subjects;—I have written to your worthy father, to the effect, that I wish you to be placed under some proper matronly guardianship, till you return home ; meantime, my accomplished relative, Lady Anna Norman, has consented to receive you on a visit until some arrangements are made, which I will hereafter specify :—so that no imputation can rest upon my character for decorum with Sir John,” he continued, holding himself up and looking for approbation at Mr. Norman.

“ Lady Anna will be here shortly,” said Eustace, gently addressing Mr. Warburton, but, glancing at Rosabel, who seemed almost stupefied with the course which events had taken.

“ How unfortunate,” said Rosabel, “ that my sister has left ! I cannot go to my Aunt Evelyn ; and I do not like to intrude upon those whom I scarcely know—otherwise,” she said, with some tremor and hesitation, “ my father has, or had, some friends.—The unfortunate,” thought she, “ must speak doubtfully on that point.”

“ Lady Anna will have so much pleasure in your society—she will be proud to receive you,” said Mr. Norman, in a tone of deep concern and kindness.

“ Let Lady Anna speak for herself, for here she comes,” cried Mr. Warburton.—“ Why very poorly to-day, Lady Anna ; my spirits quite gone—very flat. I miss my poor dear departed Mrs. Warburton most at meal time : and I believe I shall go without dinner soon, rather than order it. She was so used to do those things for me. I was quite a spoiled child you know.”

“ I do know, indeed,” thought Lady Anna, as, looking at Eustace, she sat down between him and Rosabel.

“ Dr. Ravensworth recommends Cheltenham,” pursued Mr. Warburton, “ for the benefit of my health and spirits. I am not going this fortnight, however—till all is settled here.”

“ I consider Miss Fortescue as my visitor for the present,” said Lady Anna, “ and shall be proud to claim her as such.”

Rosabel was silent, whilst the reflection—  
“ and thus am I sent from one person to

another—dependant on all, cared for by none,” passed through her mind. How different to her early expectations; and to the notions of family importance, with which she had been impressed !

“ I shall have you with me, Miss Fortescue, as much as I can,” said Mr. Warburton, “ consistently with my sense of propriety.—Any Sunday, Lady Anna, that you want to go into the country or to be alone, whilst I am in town, she can be with me.—My dear, I am sure your father will be perfectly satisfied at your being with Lady Anna; seeing that her Ladyship is a relation of mine,” added Mr. Warburton, pompously.

“—And as I see Miss Fortescue’s servant is waiting for directions with some packages in the hall, and as my horses have been out some time, may I run off with her at once, sir ?” asked Lady Anna, rising, and anxious, from consideration to Rosabel, to close this scene.

“ Just as your Ladyship wishes — I don’t feel it to be the thing to have horses and carriages at my door just now ; and as two of the Mr. Clutterbucks promised to come, in a quiet way, to sit with me to-night—”



“ You will not miss us so much,” said Lady Anna. “ Farewell, sir. Come, Eustace. Miss Fortescue, I fear I must hurry you away,” she added, as she drew Rosabel’s arm within hers, and, after her bidding farewell, led her rapidly down stairs.

Rosabel, in silence and dejection, acquiesced in her destiny. Hers was no spirit to yield with indifference to the yoke of obligation. She felt, and justly, that her father had relinquished her to what he had expected to prove a different fate. Accustomed to the notion of a home of her own, her proud spirit rebelled against the idea of obligation to any except to those whom her parents had delegated to receive and cherish her. It was with real bitterness of grief that she withdrew, and, leaning upon Lady Anna’s arm, descended the stairs; Eustace attending in silence; and Mr. Warburton following them to the landing place, with heavy tread.

“ Pray, forgive me, my dear Miss Fortescue,” said Lady Anna, as the party seated themselves in the family coach of the Normans, “ if I have been the means of proposing a plan which is, I fear, disagreeable to you: but I thought that it

would be so wretchedly dull for any young person to be with Mr. Warburton just now—and I fancied that to him you might be—”

“—An incumbrance,” said Rosabel ; her face crimsoning as she spoke.

“ No !” only a charge too important for Mr. Warburton’s present state of health and spirits to bear. I fear that you will have thought me interfering.”

“ No !” replied Rosabel, “ I do not indeed—there was a time when kindness might not have been rightly appreciated by me ; but, of late, it has been rare to me ;—and I prize it as one who has been too well inured to the reverse.”

“ Let me endeavour to supply poor Mrs. Warburton’s place,” said Lady Anna. “ At least, Eustace and I,” she added, looking at her cousin, in whose countenance she saw the expression of deep concern and interest—“ Eustace and I will endeavour to make you very happy ; you shall be quite our first object of interest. Do not grieve so, my dear Miss Fortescue. Trust in Providence—trust in the kindness of your friends.”

“ Oh, Lady Anna ! it is not for myself, but

for others ; my father away, and she who loved me for his sake, and who loved me far too well, gone—so suddenly too !”

Lady Anna glanced at Eustace, and was silent. “ The tears of the young and beautiful,” thought she, generally meet with a responsive sympathy. Why is Eustace so deeply affected ?” And whilst thus she ruminated, the carriage stopped at the door of her own residence in the great metropolis.

## CHAPTER XV.

“ ————— Give me, Duke,  
 The eyes that look'd upon my father's face !  
 The hands that help'd my father to his wish !  
 The feet that flew to do my father's will !  
 The heart that bounded at my father's voice !  
 And say, that Mantua were built of ducats,  
 And I could be its duke at cost of these,  
 I would not give them for it ! ”

WIFE OF MANTUA.—SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

THE Earl of —, Lady Anna's father, was at this time absent from London ; her mother, the Countess, had been dead many years ; but her place, as far as the sanction of a custom was concerned, had, for years, been supplied by a lady, half chaperon, half companion ; and in her walks, and at public places, the Lady Anna found her cousin, Mr. Norman, a convenient and ever-ready escort. It was not, therefore, any matter of surprise to Rosabel, that Mr. Norman should come in and out, like one of the family, and spend his evenings wholly with his cousin and herself. His habits and tastes were, indeed, all domestic, and the conversation of two animated young ladies was likely, to a person of Mr. Norman's taste, to prove a

far greater attraction than the gaieties and pleasures of the metropolis.

And now Rosabel's mind began, for the first time since her disappointment, to recover its healthy tone, its energy, its elasticity. It was not only the kindness and consideration which Lady Anna manifested towards her, nor the sedulous, but inoffensive, attention with which Mr. Norman studied to render himself agreeable to her, which soothed and cheered her:—there was something renovating in the daily, hourly, contemplation of intrinsic worth, embellished by the highest mental culture that education and refined society could give. Time, also, was effecting for Rosabel that which it usually accomplishes for all mankind. Her regrets were softened—the stings of a too exact memory were becoming less poignant; certain misgivings, and, indeed, self-upbraidings, were reasoned down into a calm estimate of her own motives, and these were pure: she had that consolation which sooner or later never fails to support us—the consolation of knowing herself to be guileless, and guiltless in the sight of God.

New enjoyments began to open before a

mind fully capable of reaping an intellectual harvest; a mind which, though it had been left fallow, possessed a soil, to speak metaphorically, originally productive. She found that acquirements and talents did not necessarily render their possessors overbearing, tedious, and pedantic; on the contrary, no one was so open to conviction as Lady Anna;—no one so unassuming, nor so little prone to pique himself on his attainments, as Mr. Norman. Then he could talk upon trifling subjects with an easy elegance, which reminded Rosabel of one person alone—she wished she could forget the parallel which too often her imagination was fain to draw between the only two superior men whom, in her short experience, she had numbered among her acquaintance.

It was not possible that Rosabel could be long with those who recommended virtue, by making it agreeable to others, and who adorned society by their varied information—who did not, after the Lovaine fashion, obtrude Virtue upon you, so trigged out in the garb of self-righteousness, that you were fain to run away from her;—who performed their religious duties with unostentatious regularity; nor con-

demned those whose sense and perception of that all-engrossing subject might be equally fine, equally sincere, with their own, but whose notions of duty, or whose early habits, did not enforce the observances of religion with the same exactness and regularity;—it was not possible for Rosabel to be long in such society as this, without becoming reconciled, as it were, to human nature. Like most young persons who have set out in life full of enthusiasm for every thing great and good, Rosabel had, at first, over-estimated the characteristics of those individuals with whom she had come into contact; and had then, after disappointment upon disappointment, ranked them too low; taken depressing views of human nature; and, discovering that there was much evil, fancied that there could be no good in civilized society; no virtue, no sincerity;—and, in the male portion of the community, no purity, no constancy.

These unjust impressions, which display a partial knowledge of human nature only,—for the wisest and the experienced, whilst they admit of much that is vicious and erroneous, are still fain to allow that good predominates;—these impressions yielded by degrees to the

conviction daily brought to Rosabel, that there were two persons, at any rate, in this "working-day world," who habitually studied the happiness and vital welfare of others. An ardour for intellectual and virtuous improvement began to possess Rosabel ; to her surprise, she discovered that they were connected ; and that the more cultivated, and the more extended the mind, the less chance was there of petty selfishness, or of moroseness, pride, and all the irritating evils of our own creation. Alas ! people complain of the miseries of life, and forget that it was not intended to be miserable ; they do not perceive, or they will not perceive, that the world is laid out for happiness—for rational, intellectual, every-day enjoyment.

Rosabel now became aware of her own deficiencies, and her new friendships constituted to her a fresh motive for improvement. She wished to be a companion to Lady Anna and to Eustace ; their good-nature, their condescension to her ignorance, did not satisfy her. She longed to grasp at the knowledge which they had taught her to value ; and she felt, felt justly, that she had the power within her to



attain the intellectual eminence at which she aimed.

To these dawnings of a new ambition the conversation and example of Lady Anna, no doubt, in a great measure, contributed ; but they were still more aided by those of Mr. Norman. For it is in the nature of woman to be powerfully influenced in her destinies by man, even when those destinies are not involved in the mazes of a love-suit, or mounted on the matrimonial high road to happiness. Eustace was of an age and character to inspire a young mind, not wholly devoid of romance, with a respect bordering upon enthusiastic admiration. Of a deportment rather pensive than graceful, but refined by education and habit to the highest polish, his manners were, by strangers, deemed reserved, and sometimes proud ; yet, under this exterior, Eustace Norman concealed affections of the deepest character, passions regulated, but naturally strong, and an enthusiasm for beauty, whether physical or intellectual, of which virtuous and highly-gifted minds are never destitute.

Rosabel, from being much afraid of Mr. Norman's talents, began, as she knew him bet-

ter, to rest upon him for information, and for the guidance of her intellect. Instinctive as a child in discovering its true friends, she perceived that he loved to lead her mind into channels of improvement, and to cherish her desire for knowledge ; and she felt the more grateful to him, that she was certain he must secretly, in his heart, despise her ignorance, and pity the little skill which she had in concealing her deficiencies.

December had commenced ;— some appearances of snow had rendered the comforts of Lady Anna's hospitable mansion more than usually delightful, and Rosabel had been three weeks under Lady Anna's roof, when she received a letter, announcing the prospect of Sir John Fortescue's return in a few days to London. She had been expecting this epistle, day after day, with some anxiety. One morning, when she was dutifully endeavouring to improve herself in history—chusing, as a commencement to her historical studies, "Robertson's History of America," Mr. Norman surprised and delighted her, by bringing her the long-looked-for dispatch. " I met the postman," he said, smiling, " and I

persuaded him to give it to me for you—knowing you were so very anxious.”

Rosabel, forgetting to thank him, after she had glanced hastily over the contents of the epistle, said, with some agitation, “Where is Lady Anna?”

“I really do not know; shall I seek her?” asked Mr. Norman, standing, however, quite immovable; and his countenance expressed considerable curiosity as he saw the varying colour and suppressed emotion of Miss Fortescue.

“He is coming,” said Rosabel, after a moment’s pause; “but, I forgot!” she added, remembering the slender right which she had to consider Mr. Norman a friend of the family—“You do not know my father?” she said, abruptly.

“Not at present,” replied Mr. Norman, resuming his place near her; and, after a moment’s pause, sitting down by her.

“My father,” said Rosabel, her face suffusing as she spoke—“my father was obliged—but I dare say Mr. Warburton has told you—partly from the unfortunate issue of a law-suit, and partly from other embarrassments, but

most," she added, speaking hurriedly, and looking down, "from the sad misconduct of my eldest brother, of which circumstance you have, I dare say, heard?"

"No, I have not," replied Eustace, in a tone more than usually gentle and kind; though his manner to Rosabel was always gentle—always kind—"I have not, indeed;" and he looked at her with deep concern as he spoke, and saw that her flushed cheek was moistened with starting tears.

Rosabel sighed deeply, and resumed—"Well, if you do not know, 'tis as well you never should. My father is one of the most honourable men in the world, Mr. Norman, and till now our family has been untainted. However, we have nearly got over *that* grief now! Were I Phillip," she continued, raising her head and throwing off, with sudden effort, all dejection of manner, "I know what I would do—I would expiate my dishonour like a man—I would go out as a volunteer to Ireland, or I would try to get a commission in some foreign regiment, even that—or I would presently set sail for America, and join the gallant, loyal, devoted troops there, and supply the

place of the many who have fallen, or who may fall, there," she added, with faltering voice. —"I would redeem my name somehow ; — wouldn't you, Mr. Norman ?"

Mr. Norman made no reply ; his eyes were fixed upon her countenance, so indescribably expressive, which was turned towards him as she spoke.

"And then, only think !—my dearest papa—Sir John, I mean—checking the exuberance of manner with which she was ever inclined to speak of her father, "Sir John says he is ill ; now I am afraid his illness is on the spirits, and that is very bad, is it not ? Does grief ever kill ?" she resumed in a mournful tone. "Young people, I know, can stand its effects ; but, no doubt, at my father's time of life, it must be very, very dangerous."

"I hope not—and how is it that you are so conversant with the subject ?" said Mr. Norman, smiling.

"Oh !" answered Rosabel, trying to smile, "we all have our miseries, real or fancied ; I have only one now—impatience to see my father and to live at home with him again."

"In London, or at Hales Hall ?"

“ Not at Hales, oh! no—no—it is shut up now; my father’s respectability and comfort, and even honour, were sacrificed for his sons.—No,—no. In all probability we can never live at Hales again: ours will be but a very humble home, wherever it is—in London, I fancy—but still it will be *home*.”

“ Then you are absolutely glad to get away from us—from Lady Anna, I mean?”

“ Oh dear, no! I can never expect to meet again with such a friend as Lady Anna; but relations are different altogether: and then, our very misfortunes—my father’s misfortunes I mean—have drawn us more closely together, and made us feel how essential is our mutual affection. I was afraid of my father once, though—and afraid of you, too, Mr. Norman, once.—My father’s manners are, you will think, somewhat forbidding, and he’s remarkably grave.”

“ He is an excellent man, I have no doubt,” replied Mr. Norman; “ and I am much honoured by your coupling my name with his.” He spoke laughingly;—but the colour came vehemently into his face, as if the allusion did not altogether please.

“I like grave people,” said Rosabel,—“rather grave; “I am almost fond of irritable, proud characters, I do think—those whom the world reckons proud,” she added, and sank for a few moments into a reverie.

“Francis Ashbrook,” said Mr. Norman, trying in vain to dive into her thoughts, and to follow the course of her reflections, “is reckoned very agreeable—do you think so?”

“Yes; but I should like him better if he were graver: more like—,” she checked herself. “How much better it would be for him, if he were in some profession. All men are better for being in a profession — don’t you think so?”

“Do *you* think so?” asked Eustace, earnestly. “There are so few professions that one’s circumstances allow men to follow. There is the Bar, to be sure.”

“Why not the army?” asked Rosabel, with a glowing countenance. “I do not see why men of fortune and condition should be kept up like specimens of rare china—for show, not use—in these times of trouble.”

“—And so, you would send us all to Spain, or the Indies, or to America; whence there would

be little chance of seeing us home again?" said Mr. Norman. "It is strange to me," he resumed, recurring to a subject upon which he felt some risings of curiosity,—“that you should never have seen Francis Ashbrook, who must have been well known to you, surely, as Captain Ashbrook's cousin; for I remember Francis being often in Shropshire, or Derbyshire, or somewhere with his cousin, at some one or another of Captain Ashbrook's estates.”

“Derbyshire? was he ever in Derbyshire? are you sure?” cried Rosabel, a new light breaking in upon her mind.

“I am not sure, but I dare say he was. I can ask him, if you are very anxious,” replied Eustace, laughing—“If it is a matter of very great moment to you.”

“I *am* very anxious,” said Rosabel, the colour on her face fading to a death-like paleness.

Mr. Norman looked at Rosabel; surprized, and curious, and vexed.

“What can this mean,” thought he; “she takes a strange interest in Francis. If you wish it, I will enquire,” he said.

“I do wish it very much,” replied Rosabel,



with an earnestness which came from the heart. "Do not fail me ; I am sure you are too kind to disappoint me. Will you ask him this very night ?"

"I will, if I chance to see him, since you wish it," replied Eustace, more and more puzzled and vexed, he scarcely knew why ; and in this frame of mind he went home to dress for dinner.

## CHAPTER XVI.

" ————— the trifling of his favour,  
 Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood ;  
 A violet in the youth of primy nature,  
 Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,  
 The perfume and suppliance of a minute :  
 No more.  
 Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,  
 If with too credent ear you list his songs ;  
 Or lose your heart — — —  
 To his unmastered importunity." HAMLET.

THE day after the conversation just detailed had taken place, Lady Anna chanced to be alone with her cousin, Mr. Norman. It seemed that the same idea had, without any previous communication between them, taken place in the mind of each. Both had remarked the interest which Rosabel felt in every circumstance connected with Mr. Ashbrook ; a certain pensiveness when he was present—an extreme curiosity as to the previous events and destination of his life—a solicitude to dive into many points of his character—and less dislike to his attentions than they expected, from the well-known habits of Francis, that a young lady of a mind so ingenuous, and a character so free

from the love of admiration, as that of Rosabel's appeared to be, would have manifested.

"I cannot think," said Lady Anna, as she laid aside her drawing—"I cannot think what has been the matter with Miss Fortescue, or, I should say, Rosabel, as she wishes me to call her so, for this last week; she is greatly unsettled, either by the expected arrival of her father, or by—" she paused; and Eustace, to whom these words were addressed, turned and looked at her earnestly, for a few moments, whilst she resumed:—

"Can it be?—I hope it is not—perhaps it is my fancy—but I imagined that Francis Ashbrook might, in some degree, have been the cause of this uncomfortable change in Rosabel." Lady Anna's eyes met those of her cousin as she spoke; and a deep blush settled on the face of both individuals.

"I wish she were safe under the protection of her father," said Lady Anna, thoughtfully.—  
"Eustace, perhaps you can speak to Francis, and tell him that I think he is not justified in the marked, and perhaps somewhat too free, attentions which he pays to a young and simple girl."

"Do you think he meets with encouragement?" enquired Eustace, looking at a book which he held in his hand.

"I do not know," replied Lady Anna, after a short pause.

A silence, which lasted for some moments, ensued.

"Miss Fortescue is so young," resumed Lady Anna, "that I should be sorry that her affections were at present engaged with any thing, except improvement, and her duty to her father; should not you?"

"Oh, certainly!" said Eustace—"certainly. But you do not fear the contrary, do you?"

"I cannot say that: knowing Francis's thoughtless, and perhaps dissolute, turn of mind, were it not better to warn Rosabel not to encourage too much intimacy—or, is it as well to leave it alone? Ignorance of vice is, to a certain extent, virtue, in young minds."

"A virtue which she possesses in a high degree," rejoined Eustace, still looking at his book.

"What I am afraid of," added Lady Anna, "is this—that Sir John, not being aware of Francis's character, will not discountenance

his visits ; and that Rosabel's affections may be engaged before she has judgment and reason to controul her predilections. I should regret such a circumstance extremely — should not you ?”

“ Oh, decidedly — do you think it probable ? Have you observed any symptoms ?”

“ I don't know ; but I have a horror of Ashbrook's principles — his object is amusement ; of that we are certain : as to a serious and permanent attachment, of that we know him to be incapable. Pray counsel me, Eustace ; I feel that I have, as it were, the charge of this poor girl, until I consign her to her father : and then, she has no mother to assist her in her path through life.”

“ Really,” said Eustace, “ I am very unable to advise you upon this subject ; but every thing depends on what you — you consider to be the state of Miss Fortescue's feelings ; she has been already much brought into contact with Francis : his qualities are all of a kind calculated to render him popular with your sex ; and it is possible that she may — may —”

“ And can you contemplate such a possibility as that which you allude to, with any degree of

patience, Eustace ?” cried Lady Anna, rising indignantly, and advancing towards her cousin. “ Am I mistaken in your feelings, in your character ?”

“ What do you mean, Lady Anna ?—to what do you allude ?—what feelings have I displayed ?” enquired Eustace, his face suddenly reddening, and his eye sinking under the angry glance of one whom he both respected and loved.

“ Can you, Eustace, tolerate the notions of the female character which you know Francis to entertain ? Could you recommend him as an associate to your sister, if you had a sister ? Can you justify his principles, or extenuate all we know of his character ? Do men think so little of these things ? And, could you bear the idea of uniting with so careless, not to say profligate, a being, an innocent young girl of nineteen—the idol of her unfortunate, but virtuous parent ; and one who may be moulded into everything that is noble and excellent ? Excuse me, Eustace, but I am really angry with you for tolerating such an idea—for being so lukewarm on the subject.”

“ You have no reason,” replied Norman,

looking resolutely away from her: "I am not lukewarm upon the subject; but what can I do?"

"It were better for her to be in her grave than attached, or even married, to Francis," resumed Lady Anna, with a deep sigh; "but it would not come to a marriage; her father would never permit that, surely."

"But, if her affections are engaged," said Eustace, gravely—

"That is what I wish to prevent," cried Lady Anna, eagerly; and you can, and will assist me; will you not, Eustace?"

"I have not the least objection in the world," replied her cousin, looking up in her face with a smile. "No task could be more agreeable. Shall I fall in love with her myself?" The question was sportively asked, but not without some confusion.

Lady Anna started back; and a flush passed across her brow as she answered, with assumed cheerfulness, "that will be decidedly the best way, if you make haste; but I am very much of opinion, that, if Rosabel has ever thought of being in love, and all girls of her years do think it, Francis has first roused the latent sentiment; else why should she feel such an ex-

tröme interest in every thing relating either to him or to his family ?”

“ Then I cannot hope to compete with Francis,” said Eustace, quietly taking up the book which he had been reading at the beginning of the conversation.

“ But you will coolly resign Rosabel to the prospect of an union with such a man as Francis ? Of an union, indeed, there is little prospect, his object being only to amuse himself. Francis will never marry ; and you well know that, Eustace. I am astonished, so much interest as you appear to have felt in poor Miss Fortescue, that you should be so indifferent to this circumstance.”

“ I am not indifferent,” answered Mr. Norman.

“ All that I require of you is this—that you will warn Francis, that Sir John is a man not likely to submit to any trifling with his daughter’s affections ;—nor is he likely ever to consent to her uniting herself to such a person as Francis. At present, I really do think that Rosabel’s affections are free, which is a hopeful circumstance, is it not, Eustace ? I shall watch them well to-night, and I hope you will also



judge for yourself upon the matter. Really, I begin to be tired of your whole sex; you make common cause against poor woman's understanding; even you, Eustace, combine with the rest of the world to make this interesting and well-disposed young lady vain and artificial."

"I!" said Mr. Norman, turning round to defend himself; but Lady Anna had left the room.

Mr. Norman pondered on the matter during the whole of the important time of dressing for dinner that day; and it must be indeed an important subject which will divert a man, beginning to be in love, from the placing of a cravat, or the form of a waistcoat. With regard to Lady Anna's hints and suggestions, Eustace had observed, himself, that Miss Fortescue manifested a subdued but obvious curiosity and interest in whatever related to Francis Ashbrook, and that her looks were often riveted upon his countenance with an expression of mingled interest and melancholy, even when he was neither addressing her nor speaking to any other person. This had the semblance of an incipient preference—a preference which Eustace well knew could meet

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with no adequate return ; for Francis had been always of a wild and dissolute turn, whilst his defects were yet glossed over by a seeming carelessness in his vices, an indifference to opinion opposed to hypocrisy, and a happy assurance which concealed a determined selfishness and real want of moral courage.

Both Eustace and Lady Anna knew their cousin well, and were aware that his nature was incapable of a lasting attachment to any woman, however amiable, or beautiful, or gifted. Lady Anna had cherished, formerly, the laudable, but visionary notion of endeavouring to reclaim Francis Ashbrook, by kind counsels, from reckless associates, and from the degrading female society which his taste led him to seek in preference to the better portion of the sex ; but she had found that little influence was to be obtained over a character of habitual duplicity, and, consequently, of little genuine feeling. Francis affected transitory remorse, and, with an affectation of candour which bordered upon a hardened confession of unrepaired delinquencies, owned his sins, and sinned again the next day. When there was any point to be gained, — when parental

displeasure was to be soothed, or Mr. Warburton propitiated into paying a part of his debts, he was all openness and repentance—only wished he had always had such a friend and monitor as his dear cousin Anna—it was astonishing what kindness and reason could do with him. Had he always been thus treated, how different would have been his fate ; “ he might be led, but could never be driven,” &c. When Lady Anna’s mediation had been, as it usually was, successful, she quickly lost sight, for a time, of the penitent cavalier, who plunged anew into his usual follies, nor reappeared until again he found his cousin’s good offices necessary.

Lady Anna had, therefore, quite given him up ; and all she now desired, with respect to Francia, was to prevent his injuring the happiness, by trifling with the affections, of any of her female acquaintance ; for she knew he was capable of going to great lengths to pass away a few weary hours, or to gratify his own vanity, or to compete with Eustace, whom he at once envied and respected, admired and dreaded.

On the other hand, Rosabel’s mind had been of late occupied with conjectures which harassed her, and perplexed her greatly. Since she had

seen Francis Ashbrook, and had become aware of the character which he bore among his usual associates, she had asked herself more than once the question, "is it not possible that I may have been hasty in condemning Captain Ashbrook as the cause of poor Mary's miseries, that the cousins might have been mistaken for each other?" The notion once started, Rosabel caught at every shadow of confirmation to strengthen the latent hope that it might be so. Captain Ashbrook was but little known in Derbyshire, and there was a general resemblance between him and his cousin; Francis, indeed, bore to his elder cousin as much of likeness as height and family characteristics can give; and the deficiencies of expression and the minor points of similitude were not likely to be perceptible when the two young men were separated. Yet, at times, Rosabel reflected how vain and groundless was this hope! There were many persons in habits of communication with the owner of the estate, who must have known him personally.—And, after many perplexing endeavours to sum up all the evidence in her own favour, Rosabel, more

sorrowful than before this chimera had occurred to unsettle her mind, rejected it as romantic and delusive.

The kindness which she had shared since she had been Lady Anna's guest, and the unexpected partiality evinced to her by Mr. Norman, had, however, contributed in a great degree to lessen the pangs which her disappointment had inflicted, and to raise her hopes of future enjoyment in a world where she began to find there were, at least, some good people. Mr. Norman's manner, so gentle, yet so manly, so flattering, yet so sincere, reminded her of Captain Ashbrook's, and was, she almost began to think, more refined even, and more encouraging, less variable, though less ardent, than his: it was impossible for her to associate with so intelligent a companion, and so genuine a character as that of Eustace, and not to feel for him a sentiment, a shade different to that with which her female friend inspired her. The tenacity of first love is, in my opinion, very questionable, and, I do believe, that its reputation for vigour has been greatly enhanced by the difficulties by which it is usually assailed. Early attachments owe much

of their charm to opposition ; and frequently evaporate when the controuling force, the high-pressure engine is taken away.

Rosabel was still very young, and not by any means of a pertinacious disposition. She had struggled with her early predilections, both from principle and from that inherent delicacy of mind which young Englishwomen are allowed peculiarly to possess. She liked in Eustace the qualities which she had liked in Captain Ashbrook ; and whilst her fancy still clung, as fancies will cling, to certain touching remembrances of the object of her early regard, she tutored her mind to think that Eustace was so much the more exemplary, that he must be the more agreeable of the two individuals.

Lady Anna remarked, as she sat at dinner, on the day referred to, that Rosabel's countenance had begun to assume an expression of happiness which she had not known her long enough to observe before ; this she ascribed, in a great degree, to the prospect of Sir John's expected return ; and she earnestly trusted that no such unnecessary evil as an ill-directed predilection for Francis might interfere to blight this improvement in Rosabel's good spirits.

“ Now,” thought Eustace, as he placed himself at the bottom of the table, his usual post, “ now I must, according to Lady Anna’s commands, watch—listen—suspect.—Let me think—Oh! I remember—Derbyshire is the theme interesting to Miss Fortescue: she can have no objections to her queries being put in her own presence, I suppose.”

“ Mr. Warburton set off for Cheltenham to-day, did he not?” Lady Anna carelessly enquired, as she took her place at the table.

“ Oh, yes!” replied Francis; “ Mrs. Warburton being well buried.—How apprehensive he must have been till she was fairly disposed of:—I beg your pardon, Miss Fortescue, I did not expect to elicit that glance of displeasure.”

“ She was very amiable.”

“ Yes, Lady Anna—and, like all the amiables, I often wished her in heaven. What can be more oppressive than an amiable woman—an expression which implies dullness, plainness, dowdiness, and insipidity in all its degrees?—I never yet saw an amiable woman that I could endure.”

“ We are very much obliged to you, Francis.”

“ In London, thank heaven! the women

manage to conceal their amiable propensities—they don't weary you to death with their charities, or make you ill with their conjugal devotion—of all things *that* is most odious—or drive you out of their drawing-rooms by the display of their children—among whom, in some families, there is an eternal baby—but in the country—”

“ There, society is very different altogether,” interrupted Eustace, eagerly, seizing his opportunity, and little thinking he was playing into the hands of a distant rival—“ in Derbyshire, for instance, it is very dull, is it not, Francis?—you have often been there, I know.”

“ In Derbyshire,” replied Francis, rattling on with his usual carelessness, “ in Derbyshire the natives are not yet emerged from barbarism. There they live in their fastnesses,—for most of their houses are situated like fortresses;—and stupidity and narrow-mindedness are handed down from one generation to another, like heirlooms, since the days of the conquest.”

“ A pleasing account,” said Lady Anna.—“ I suppose it is very different, in different parts of the county.”

“ What part of Derbyshire have you visited chiefly?” asked Eustace, glancing for a moment



at Rosabel, who, with heightened colour, awaited the reply."

"Oh—I was domesticated at different times at Ellerslie—Edmund's shooting-box there—a very, very sequestered spot," replied the unconscious Francis.

"Your cousin lives chiefly at Ashbrook, I believe," resumed Eustace, wishing to give Rosabel a little time to recover, for he saw that she was tremulous, from her inexplicable anxiety about Derbyshire.

"—Yes; but he goes to Ellerslie now and then," answered Francis. "He has been very little at either of his estates since he first entered the army—you are aware of *that*. Happily, he has no father; so he is not kept up like a curiosity, in cotton wool, as I have been, nearly all my life—he may lose his life, if he chuses—there is no one to grieve much about him, if he goes.—And I, for one, should not drown or hang myself, of course. That is candid, is it not, Lady Anna?"

"Oh, yes!—but there are other virtues besides being candid, Francis."

"Captain Ashbrook is a fine, gallant fellow, I am told," said Eustace. "The papers have

not yet mentioned him ; but I understand the general's private dispatches have—he will be a very likely man to have a regiment.”

“ Yes—and a capital hand he would be at a forlorn hope,” replied Francis. “ He has nerve enough for any thing—his whole soul is in his profession. Ashbrook has no domestic propensities, no susceptibility ; though he had a long leave of absence, and lived, of course, much in society, whilst in England, he went away heart-whole, and with his usual appetite for distinction. No one ever heard of his making a proposal to a lady yet—he is a charming fellow for a predecessor in one's expectations.—I am very sanguine, you see, Lady Anna.”

“ It is strange, with his expectations,” said Lady Anna, “ that he should not have retired from the army, having, I believe, sufficiently distinguished himself in the first campaign. Yet I admire his determination to be something more than a mere clod—something above a mere holder of valuable property ;—and I think he must be a very superior man indeed.”

“ He is, no doubt,” replied Francis ; “ but as proud as Lucifer, and as ambitious too :—

he is nobody in society; is he, Miss Fortescue? You must have known something of him in Shropshire."

"Yes, I did," answered Rosabel, her early prepossessions crowding into her mind. "I did know Captain Ashbrook—but I do not agree in your opinion of him. I thought him intelligent, and animated, and unpresuming."—She stopped suddenly short, ashamed of the enthusiasm into which she had been betrayed, and colouring deeply.

"Ah! that is just as it always has been," said Francis; "Edmund has always been so highly approved of—that is the word, by every body. He has the happy art of veiling his defects, of behaving always *comme il faut*. He is Joseph Surface, and I am Charles. Through life his reputation will far transcend mine."

"I think it will; I quite agree with you there," said Lady Anna; "how fortunate a man he has been never to receive a wound; though not for want of daring, I believe—he bears a charmed life, Francis; you will never be Lord of Medlicote."

"I am not so desponding in that way as

you are, Lady Anna ; for, even now, Ashbrook stands in no ordinary peril. That division of the army has a fair chance of being cut to pieces, in my opinion ; however, of course, I should, seriously speaking, be miserable, if any thing happened to Ashbrook. Miss Fortescue does not like our talking of wounds and fights ; she has turned pale upon the occasion. Well, I declare ! Ashbrook ought to be highly flattered !”

“ You forget,” said Lady Anna, “ that Miss Fortescue has a brother in the army, and, perhaps, other relations.”

“ Young ladies do not turn pale for brothers,” replied Francis, slyly—but his inuendo met with a discouraging glance from Lady Anna ; and the conversation quickly turned upon other topics.

“ He is Joseph Surface, is he ?” thought Rosabel, in private. “ This, then, is his character ; if so, thank God I have escaped becoming his wife, if that be the case ! Why cannot I think myself fortunate ? Why should I still court every recollection of him ? It is obvious that Mr. Ashbrook has no hesitation in speaking of Derbyshire. There is no hope—no mistake

there. And even were it possible that I could forget his sins, or find that I had been mistaken, how little probability is there, in any case, of our meeting again?—a forlorn hope indeed!”

## CHAPTER XVII.

" God is ever present, ever felt,  
 In the void waste as in the city full ;  
 And where he vital breathes there must be joy.  
 When e'en at last the solemn hour shall come,  
 And wing my mystic flight to future worlds,  
 I cheerful will obey."

THOMSON'S HYMN.

SIR JOHN'S arrival did not take place for some days ; and Lady Anna, to dissipate the longing anticipations of Rosabel, for she could not but ascribe to hope deferred the languid, yet unsettled, spirits of her friend, proposed several little schemes of pleasure, and of moderate diversion.

Country excursions seemed out of the question ; yet one fine, sunny day, even near Christmas time, a sudden fancy inspired Rosabel with a wish to breathe the fresh air of the neighbourhood of London. Lady Anna was always ready to promote the rational enjoyments of others ; and Eustace was eager to catch at any plan which would ensure him the uninterrupted enjoyment of Miss Fortescue's

society for a whole morning, without the distracting objects which Hyde Park, or the Mall in St. James's, or other fashionable places of resort, presented.

The ladies were both fond of riding, and though the weather was somewhat cold for this exercise, they both preferred it to a carriage; so, at eleven, they mounted their horses, and proceeded in the northern direction of the town. They rode through Old Bond-street, at the termination of which, New Bond-street had not many years been completed upon the field formerly called Conduit Mead, from one of the conduits which anciently supplied London with water. They crossed Oxford road, then opening upon a plain, level country, and not entirely finished on both sides; then, after clearing through a bridle-path, the swamps and nuisances of Marylebone (anciently Mary-bourne), and leaving its remotely-situated little church to the right, they emerged into the road to Edgware, After riding for some miles, they turned, by Mr. Norman's direction, into a narrow lane, and, ascending an eminence, gained the sequestered and scattered village of Hendon. A straggling cottage, here and there, alone met their view;—

until they passed the row of alms-houses on the summit of the hill, and saw its aged female occupants, some, with their doors half-opened, spinning by a blazing fire, the humming, burring sound of the wheel soothing the querulous dispositions of their age and station, whilst the solitary mode and certain success of their employment gave an air of contented independence to their demeanour. Several of the elderly matrons stepped forward, and dropped a courtsey, peering curiously the while at the unexpected visitants to the village on this wintry day.

“ I hope spinning will never be discontinued among the lower classes,” said Lady Anna.

“ Nor gardening—nor any sort of spade husbandry,” added Eustace.

Rosabel was looking back, long and wistfully, at the alms-houses—“ This would be just the place for Martha,” she said, musingly, “ if— if—”

“ Who is Martha ?” asked Mr. Norman, interested in whatever interested her.

“ But it is not like, after all,” said Rosabel, not hearing him, and looking about her—for something in the village reminded her of a spot



which was seldom long absent from her thoughts—Ashbrook.

They now turned towards the church—a Gothic edifice—(and, in saying that, when speaking of church architecture, you say almost every thing that is favourable;) standing, unsheltered, on the very brow of that hill upon which the village was situated. Rosabel pointed, with delight, to the glimpse of a view beyond the road, which began now to descend the hill with a bend. An old farm-house stood alone on one side of the church; a few cottages only near the entrance to the church-yard. The party alighted, and gave their horses to the groom; then passing along a gravelled walk, they stood, for a time, entranced by the peacefulness and seclusion, and yet variety, of the scene before them.

“It would be nothing,” said Lady Anna, “any where else, but so near London.”

“It would, I think, be beautiful any where,” said Rosabel, who had more imagination, and, consequently, more susceptibility, than her friend. She separated herself from her companions, desirous of gazing alone upon the rich valley which lay extended to her view; unvaried, unhappily, by streamlet or pool, but

so swelling and meandering, so fertile, and so broken here and there by trees, that the pleased and refreshed eye could scarcely decide in what the landscape was deficient.

“Why have you led us here?” asked Rosabel, as she stood under a large ash tree—bare, indeed, of its light foliage, but that very bareness revealing its picturesque form—which grew at the very edge of the hill.

“Why have you brought us here?” she resumed, smilingly, almost sportively—“to make us unwilling to go back again? I am sure I do not know when I shall be willing to go home,” she added, seating herself upon a low grave stone, and gazing, her hands across her knees, at the soft, undisturbed scene before her.

“I am sure you will take cold,” said Eustace, gently; “do rise—pray do.” Yet he sat down by her. “Suppose you should take cold?” he added, hesitatingly.

“Suppose I should—what then?” asked Rosabel, still looking at the prospect. “I have no dread of death,” she added, suddenly. “I formerly had; but I saw a person ill once,—young, beautiful, and even sinful; but she had

no misgivings, no fears of death ; then why should I ?”

“ Oh ! for the sake of those whom you would leave behind,” replied Eustace, soothingly. “ Come, now ; do not let us always talk upon melancholy subjects. I should say, were you a stranger to me, that you had sustained some heartfelt disappointment—some appalling shock. There is always such a vein of melancholy in your conversation, which does not appear to belong to your real character.”

Rosabel was silent for a few moments. “ Suppose it is so,” she said, in her usual, unexpected manner. “ Grant that my retrospects are too melancholy—my anticipations too foreboding—”

“ Well, then,” returned Mr. Norman, “ if I may be permitted to give my opinion, I should call it a mental disease : to be cured by kind and rational, not gay and frivolous, society ; for in that, the sad heart is still more saddened. Time, and the performance of duties of an active nature—”

“ Yes ; but I have tried all those,” said Rosabel, mournfully. “ I have tried those

remedies with no success ; and now, if my vocation in life, which I take to be my dutiful (oh ! how dutiful it ought to be), my dutiful, grateful, affectionate attendance upon my father, till his days close—if that were fulfilled, I should have no objection to rest *here*," she added, laying her hand on the sod beside her.

" You speak," said Mr. Norman, " like—may I say it ?—a very young sufferer—one who has not taken a broad view of life ; of the mercies and enjoyments by which its most trying scenes are varied and alleviated : but it is cold here—had you not better rise and walk about ?" Nevertheless he could not find it in his heart to urge his request, as he felt he ought.—" You were talking of Derbyshire the other day ; have you any particular associations with Derbyshire ?"

" So many and so strong are my associations with Derbyshire," replied Rosabel, in a tone of deep melancholy, " that every place I see reminds me in some measure of scenes which I have seen there. This church-yard, for instance, makes me think of Southwell, and of many things," she added, sighingly, " con-

nected with Southwell: but it is cold—we must come here in the summer.”

“ Will you come here in the summer ? Will you remember that ? ” asked Mr. Norman, as he assisted her over the unequalities of the church-yard ; “ but see, Lady Anna has been making an excursion to the right, along those sunny fields by the side of that sheltered hedge. Shall we meet her, or will you mount your horse ? ”

“ Oh ! let us meet her. I shall not be long with her, or with you,” answered Rosabel, as she placed her arm within that of Mr. Norman, “ and you are both so kind.”

Mr. Norman coloured deeply, as he said, “ Do you think—will you give me any hope that our acquaintance may be continued when we have all three separated ? I do not mean formal, tantalizing, constrained visits ; but that we may meet with the same delightful intimacy as we have ever done.”

“ Why not ? My father never controuls my wishes or inclinations, when he knows them, in any one particular,” answered Rosabel. “ I sometimes wish he had ! ”

“ You have been accustomed, then, to a great deal of indulgence ? I cannot wonder at it—I cannot be surprised that Sir John should love and idolize you, and be proud of you.”

“ We are all in all to each other now. As to my father’s being proud of me, that is a thing I never dreamed of : but I have given him a great deal of uneasiness in my youth ; and now my whole exertions, my whole affections rather, must be employed in contributing to his happiness. Ah ! Mr. Norman, it is I who am proud of him !” she added, as, meeting Lady Anna, they turned and walked to their horses.

## CHAPTER XVII.

“ — Go to your bosom,  
 Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know.”

SHAKSPEARE

FOR the first time since Rosabel's residence in London, she went, on the following evening, with Lady Anna and Mr. Norman, to the Pantheon, then in all its fashionable celebrity. It was seldom that Lady Anna resorted to public places ; but, to divert Rosabel, she proposed a scheme of diversion for an hour or two, to wile away the time until the morrow, when the return of Sir John was confidently expected.

The great superiority of the public entertainments in former days, over those of the present time, was their accessibility. It required no golden key to let a man into Ranelagh, or the Pantheon : dressed, after certain prescribed rules, and of a respectable demean-

our, he paid his shilling, and was at once admitted into an assemblage of the first rank, fashion, beauty, and even literary distinction, in the metropolis. Flirtation or grave discussion might be engaged in, if agreeable; but the satirist, or the misanthropist was not condemned to be amiable or sociable against his will. He took his place in the evolving crowd, and did as he liked. He might be as ill-humoured as he pleased, provided he did not tread on people's toes, or take the wall out of rule. It was true, there was no specific amusement. His head was not rendered dizzy by the revolving mazes of a waltz, nor his ears dinned by the eternal drumming of a quadrille band; and he was able to walk in peace and security, with full leisure and tranquillity to lose his heart, if he chose it; an operation for which there is no time in our modern assemblies and balls.

The costume of the period, worn when Rosabel and many others, who like her, have fretted out their little day, and are sunk to rest, was so varied and picturesque, that human nature was seen under a variety of chequered aspects; and absurdity reigned to its fullest extent. The fashions of this period were out-



rageous in both sexes; and the extremes to which they were carried will probably never be witnessed again. Powder was, however, ceasing to be general; hoops were moderated; buckles diminished; and the custom of wearing artificial vegetables upon the head by way of ornament, until the person thus bedizened appeared like a market-gardener's basket, had been, within the last two or three years, effectually put to the blush by Garrick, who appeared in the character of Sir John Brute, with a variety of useful products on the summit of his peruke, and two carrots hanging down on each side of his face.

Some excesses were therefore reduced, and the classical taste of Mrs. Siddons, and the true elegance of the Duchess of Devonshire, both great female potentates, had begun to give the ladies some chance of looking lovely, graceful, and simple. The gentlemen were not so fortunate; their model was an individual of a more artificial taste than the beautiful and gifted beings just specified; and the young, accomplished, and, according to common opinion, handsome Prince of Wales, after leading his fashionable imitators on to every excess of splendour and finery,

suddenly let down the standard of dress, and introduced the short coat, round hat, cravat, and topped boots, which have proved too congenial to English taste ever since, to have been abandoned.

Lady Anna and Rosabel, with Eustace, winded round and round the thronged saloon or hall of the Pantheon, amidst a multitude of brocaded waistcoats, seam-embroidered coats, satin trains, and Papillon hats, until, tired, they rested on a bench ; Eustace several times saying to Rosabel :—

“ Does it answer your expectations—are you amused—do you like being here ?”

“ I like being with Lady Anna and you,” answered Rosabel, softly ; and Mr. Norman was contented.

An address, more hearty than ceremonious, from her brother behind her, made Rosabel turn round.

“ Hubert !” she exclaimed, shocked and distressed ; for there was something in his eye and manner which gave her the impression of his not being perfectly sober ; and, although she was little conversant in such matters, her impression was, in this respect, just.

"Hubert, pray go home," she whispered to him, gently; "do not let Lady Anna—do not let Mr. Norman, see you in this state." She rose, whilst speaking, and went up to her brother, anxious to screen him from the observation of her friends; who both, from delicacy to her, looked another way; Lady Anna occupying herself with some acquaintance, but Mr. Norman keeping a strict, though silent, watch upon Hubert's proceedings.

"If you will accompany us," said Mr. Ashbrook, on whose arm Hubert was leaning, "but a little way, I think we can persuade him to go home without further exposure."

Rosabel, eager to effect that end, slid away, unperceived; and, in a moment, mingled with the crowd before Mr. Norman was aware of her purpose; for an instant, his eye was caught by an acquaintance; when he turned round again, she was gone.

Meantime, Rosabel, leaning on Mr. Ashbrook's arm, said to him—"Can we not take him to a chair—and will you see him home, Mr. Ashbrook?"

"My dear Miss Fortescue," replied Francis, "I will do any thing but leave you."

"Then Mr. Norman will assist me," said Rosabel, looking back, but the crowd interposed, and she found it impossible to return: Hubert, at that moment, let loose of Mr. Ashbrook's arm. Rosabel saw her brother staggering towards the door, without the power to overtake him.

"Do go to him—do go to him, Mr. Ashbrook," she cried. "Leave me here, I can go back to Mr. Norman—do not mind me."

But Mr. Ashbrook's manner was any thing but calculated to give her consolation at this moment. Something there was, undefinably loose and free about his gaze; his very tone of voice made her shudder. By this time they were near the southern extremity of the Pantheon.

"Since we have lost sight of my brother," said Rosabel, shrinking from her companion—"since there is no hope of overtaking him, I wish to go back to Lady Anna."

"But I cannot spare you," replied Mr. Ashbrook, seizing her hand. "Watched as I am, by Lady Anna's Argus eyes, I have never yet been able to express half the admiration that I feel for you. Only tell me that I am not al-

ready supplanted by Edmund, and every one else, and I will confess all my sins to you, and receive absolution."

"Thank you; but I do not desire any confession; I only wish, Mr. Ashbrook, to entreat you not to lead my brother astray: whatever you may be yourself, to spare him—to think of his father—to think of me, before you induce him to enter improper and intemperate society. He is strangely altered. Oh! use your experience of the world, your knowledge of mankind, to warn him—not to mislead him."

"I will do any thing that you ask. But why should you suspect me, sweet, lovely Miss Fortescue, of endeavouring to mislead Hubert?—Have you ever heard anything to my disadvantage?—surely not."

A thought flashed across Rosabel's mind. It was one of those incomprehensible, unexpected conjectures without foundation, which seize possession of our fancy: but the impropriety of her situation, and the freedom of Mr. Ashbrook's manner, pressed more upon her even than that transient, but not entirely new, suspicion; and she said, impatiently —

"I can say every thing to you when I am with Lady Anna. This way I think we shall join her."

"But I do not want to join her," said Ashbrook; "only tell me what you have heard."

"I cannot tell you," said Rosabel, firmly; "and I will not. 'Tis a positive insult to me, Mr. Ashbrook, not to take me to my friends, and I will go to them."

"Surely," thought she to herself, "he has been at some convivial party with Hubert, and is not himself either."

Mr. Ashbrook's mind was, in truth, flickering between reason and delusion, error and truth. His head, from the habit of occasional intemperance, as well as from constitution, was stronger than Hubert's, and was not yet wholly upset by some hours' hard drinking with Hubert, at his mess; where, in those times, indeed, sobriety was considered a disgrace.

Rosabel had sufficient knowledge how to act, to know that she must avoid irritation. The crowd was very great, and she and Mr. Ashbrook seemed carried along with it, without directing their course to any one particular point.

“ You never heard anything ill of me in Derbyshire, I am sure,” said Ashbrook, whose mind was running all on one point. They were, at this moment, jammed up against a pillar.

“ No ;—I saw wrong and misery enough there,” replied Rosabel ; an unaccountable impulse urging her on ; “ but—”

“ But--but what ? You were there two years ago—tell me all about it. I have a great wish to know the end of all that matter.”

“ Of what matter ?” asked Rosabel, shaking from head to foot.

“ Oh, nothing particular,” replied her companion, a sudden change taking place in his manner. “ Nothing particular ; I did not say any thing, did I ?”

“ Did you know Alston—did you ever see Southwell ?” asked Rosabel, in a low, tremulous tone, which sank to a whisper as she spoke.

“ Come, now—Lady Anna has lectured me enough about that matter,” said Francis, an expression of deep gloom coming over his face, till it was, for a few minutes, marked by a despondency, which was seldom seen to rest upon his countenance. “ But what do you know

about it?" he resumed, suddenly, seeming to recollect himself. "If I did—what have I said?" he added, musingly—

"There is Mr. Norman," cried Rosabel, at this instant. "Oh, let me—let me go to him,"—and, with a desperate effort, she sprang to him, and clung to his arm.

"Oh, Mr. Norman!—How was it—why was it I was separated from you?—Pray take me to Lady Anna."

Mr. Norman instantly complied with her request. He saw that she was in a state of too much agitation to be spoken to at that time, and, attributing that agitation to her brother's condition, he kindly, but silently led her to the carriage, where Lady Anna was seated, awaiting her.

Rosabel was now completely overpowered—wholly unable to controul her feelings. "Oh, Lady Anna! never, never take me again to such a place—never, never let me see that wicked Mr. Ashbrook—Oh, Mr. Norman! why did you let me go away?"

Her friends did all they could to soothe her; ascribing this unwonted burst of feeling to the improper and degraded state in which Hubert



had exhibited himself before his sister, who still loved him—all too fondly, in spite of his faults.

Lady Anna conducted Rosabel immediately to her own dressing-room, as soon as they reached home. No sooner was the door closed, than Rosabel, seizing Lady Anna's arm, attempted to speak ; but for some moments the effort was unsuccessful.

“ Rosabel, my dear Rosabel,” said Lady Anna, kindly, I fear I may guess the source of all this distress. Let me warn you, Rosabel, to avoid the cause of your sorrow ; to shun him as you hope for happiness—to remember that Francis Ashbrook bears a moral pestilence about him. Oh, give not your young affections to him ! reserve them for the virtuous—the principled !”

“ I will, I will, Lady Anna,” replied Rosabel, clasping her hands ; “ I have tried to do so : I would fain hate the wicked. May God in heaven have mercy upon me, if I cannot ! But tell me, Lady Anna, tell me, in what particular has *he* sinned ? Is there any special instance in which he has played a villain's part ? Oh, tell me that !”

Lady Anna turned away.

"To-night," continued Rosabel, eagerly, breathlessly—"to-night he touched upon a theme—but I cannot tell you what it was:—he was not himself—and they say the secret sins of conscience are more vividly painted on the mind in drunkenness than in sober sense. I have heard that."

"My dearest Rosabel!" said Lady Anna, "Francis has many sins to be recalled when conscience sleeps not. Would that the impression were lasting! To what particular allusion do you refer?"

"When I was in Derbyshire," said Rosabel, hurriedly, her face pale, her form cold and trembling—"when I was in Derbyshire, I heard—nay, saw—Lady Anna—" She stopped short, turned aside, and burst into an hysterical sobbing.

Lady Anna supported her kindly, but calmly. "You will be better now," she said, after allowing Rosabel time to recover; "do not give way to these feelings. I know the story to which you allude; and oh, my dear Rosabel! as a sister, let me warn you to think of him no more."

"To think of whom?" cried Rosabel, gazing at Lady Anna, as if the answer was to give her instant death—or life.

"Why, of Francis to be sure: this is a most unhappy attachment, Rosabel—if it is an attachment. You have seen the betrayed, unhappy girl, you say—can you love the betrayer?"

"Thank you. Thank God! thank God!" said Rosabel, gasping for breath, and struggling, according to Lady Anna's advice, to repress the hysterical paroxysm which she found ready to over-master her—"Thank God! thank God! I know all now!"

"Lady Anna stared at her in amazement. "It is better you should know all, Rosabel. Poor Rosabel!" she added, kissing the fair forehead, from which the veins seemed bursting—"it is better, Rosabel, that you should know all his obliquity—his dreadful depravity: known, I believe, but to myself. I am not surprised you should have heard of it in Derbyshire."

"No! no!" gasped Rosabel, "thank God! Tell me all; I wish to know all."

"It is two years, I think, since Francis," Lady Anna began, in a calm, explanatory tone—

"it is two years since his difficulties were such, from his extravagance, that, all his friends being tired of assisting him, my father wrote to Captain Ashbrook to allow him to make Ellerslie, for a time, his home."

"She was the victim!" said Rosabel, looking upwards.

"He went, my dear Miss Fortescue,—would you believe it?—with every plausible profession, and good resolution—so much so, that we promised him to make some arrangement with respect to his affairs. You are aware that his patrimonial property is not large?"

"I really never knew, or thought about it," replied Rosabel, surprized at the question.

"He went—and we had every hope that, his bad connections being put an end to, he might be reclaimed—he went, and, to cut unpleasant subjects short, we heard nothing more of him, except that he was living at Ellerslie in privacy and quietness, until a respectable middle-aged man, a farmer, called here to make enquiries after Mr. Ashbrook's address, and to claim our aid in recovering from the villain—from the utter reprobate—his daughter."

"—And they could not find her soon enough

to save her!" exclaimed Rosabel; her kind, compassionate feelings rising above all self-gratulations, which, as yet, seemed but a dream.

"No!" answered Lady Anna, mournfully, "when they did reclaim her, she was not only for ever debased, but deserted, and, I believe, even maddened by her troubles; but you know the story."

"Not all," said Rosabel: "yet too, too much."

"He had chosen not only to make use of his cousin's property and residence, but, taking advantage of Captain Ashbrook's frequent absence—for he was in Ireland for many months about that time, and elsewhere—he had adopted his cousin's name, and, under the shadow of his good character, had carried his point the more easily. The poor girl was herself at first deceived, and then, probably, deceived her parents—

"Dwell upon all this, Rosabel; and if you have ever once thought with interest of Francis, discard that interest for ever from your mind."

Rosabel in vain strove to speak:—"It was not for him," she began to say, but her voice

died away—" it was not,—Lady Anna ; I never felt for *him* any interest ; but it is no matter now," she added—the recollection that he whom this disclosure might have affected was gone, that she had driven him from her, that the separation was, most likely, a final one, sinking her spirits down to the lowest degree of depression—" it is no matter—it signifies to no one now but to me !" and she held her hand against her aching forehead.

" I hope it is so ; I hope that what you say is—excuse the word, Rosabel—true," answered Lady Anna, gravely. " Go to rest, my dear Miss Fortescue ; and, oh, whatever you do, avoid Francis ! and remember this poor girl's fate !"



# ROSABEL.



VOL. III.



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# ROSABEL,

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BY THE AUTHORESS OF CONSTANCE.

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VOL. III.

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LONDON:

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND  
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MDCCCXXXV.



## CHAPTER I.

“ How hard it is to hide the sparks of Nature.”

CYMBELINE.

ROSABEL went down stairs to breakfast, on the morning after her visit to the Pantheon, with a light step : her eyes sparkled with unwonted delight, and the smiles of other days played upon her lips. Her whole countenance was lighted up with something more like a feverish excitement than joy ; its expression was too kindling, too unsettled, for happiness : Lady Anna observed it with pain, rather than with pleasure.

A weight seemed suddenly removed from Rosabel's heart ; she cared not to impart her feelings ; sympathy would not have added to her ecstasy. In secret had she borne her sufferings ; it was easy to her to cherish in

secret the delight of knowing that all the brightness of Captain Ashbrook's character was restored to her view in its original purity ; that he was free from such a stain as must stamp every reflection with remorse ;—that Mary's death rested not upon him. The transport of this reflection was almost too strong for Rosabel's somewhat enfeebled bodily frame. She could not rest ; she could not employ herself. She wandered from room to room, and changed her occupations many times ;—laughed without cause, and sometimes, without cause either, suddenly shed tears.

Towards evening her spirits abated. Convinced of Captain Ashbrook's innocence, a train of other considerations now forced themselves upon her. How had she rewarded his sincere and ardent and tried attachment ? With confidence, with openness ? No : she had dismissed him unheard—she had condemned him without defence—she had cruelly blighted all his prospects of domestic happiness by an unmerited severity. She had sent him, despond-

ing and humbled—for of that Lady Lovaine had assured her—to a service of danger and of privation ; and from which, in the present state of the affairs of the British Army in America, there was little glory to be reaped.

The Atlantic rolled between them ; a thousand appalling chances stood before the remote contingency of their ever meeting again. And if they should meet, was it likely that he should have remained unaltered ; constant to so undeserving, so vacillating, so inexplicable a being as herself ? Would he not—a man of a strong mind, decided, though not severe in his judgments, and regulating every feeling apparently by the rules of a rigid stoicism—would he not cast off an attachment unworthy of so superior a mind, so warm and noble a heart as his, and devote himself not only to loftier objects, but to those rationally calculated to give him an adequate return for the love with which he had honoured her ? for she was now, too late, sensible, that to be loved by him, was, in every sense, an honour.

Night drew on. Mr. Norman had dined

as usual with Lady Anna, but he was thoughtful and anxious. Rosabel's unnatural spirits in the morning had not satisfied him—he thought them assumed; whilst in Lady Anna's mind, they confirmed the notion of a struggle on Rosabel's part to shake off the influence which Francis Ashbrook had begun to attain over her affections. The tone of Rosabel's voice, when she said: "I wish to hate the wicked, may the God of Heaven forgive me if I cannot," still sounded in Lady Anna's ears. She had an undue notion of the fascinations which Francis possessed; and she estimated at too low a rate the discernment of character and the standard of excellence which Rosabel—simple and ignorant of society as she was—actually possessed. "It is best," thought Lady Anna, "to take no notice of these repressed agitations—this strange excitement. It will wear itself away in time."

Sir John's arrival was now every hour expected; and, at another time, Rosabel would have been incessantly on the watch—standing at the window, or counting the minutes, or asking the hour from every one around her;

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but now her whole mind was occupied altogether with another train of thought, another class of feelings.

She sat, listening to Lady Anna playing some solemn airs on the piano ; apparently listening, but as much abstracted and as far in thought from the scene present to her in one sense, as if every thing around her had been vacant and silent. She might now, without self accusation, dwell upon recollections of tenderness ; all too delicate and too minute to be described to others, or perhaps accurately defined even to herself : yet dwelt upon with a fond exactness ; which recalled with heart-thrilling fidelity the general impression of looks and words, which she now fancied that she saw and heard. Then the long-repelled and hidden, but not weakened, feelings of true feminine love rushed like a tide into her heart. The struggle was over, and she gave full scope to those exalted feelings of pure devotion to the object of her early choice, which woman, perhaps, can alone, in their perfection, experience.



She sat, her head reclining on her hand ; her pensive and softened, speaking countenance, watched in silence by Mr. Norman : he dwelling upon the unwonted, but ever beautiful expression of her face, and thinking that he had never seen it so beautiful. At times, a kindling fire gave to her eyes a brilliancy, which they had once always possessed when her spirits had been unbroken, and health had given its buoyancy to her form, and its joyousness to her features. Then, in a while, that lovely but transient brightness faded to a softness more than pensive—almost melancholy. For Rosabel thought of the evening of her last interview with Captain Ashbrook. She remembered his glance of deep mortification, of anger tempered by sorrow, and of wounded affection—wounded in the nicest point—when she had withdrawn from him her hand. Her recollections were so acute and intolerable ; her self reproaches so severe, that they recalled her, with their sting, from her waking dream of fond yet saddened remembrances. She rose

and drew near Mr. Norman; for she always found consolation in his conversation.

It was strange that she should feel far less reserved on all subjects to him than to Lady Anna. Mr. Norman was truly sympathetic in his nature; he could know others to be indiscreet, and could listen to their confessions, without returning the heart-wrung confession with an ill-timed, though probably wise, admonition; or a cutting hint, that it might be all the fault, not the misfortune, of the penitent. Women are less merciful to each other than men are, either in judging their own sex or ours. Lady Anna, though all kindness in action, had a decision not wholly divested of bluntness, in differing in opinion even from those whom she loved; and having been, all her life, much looked up to by those with whom she lived, her sincerity was a little, a very little tinged with self-esteem.

Rosabel was listening to Mr. Norman's conversation, when Mr. Francis Ashbrook glided in. Her voice trembled and she stopped in the middle of her sentence; she turned away—she

could neither speak to Mr. Ashbrook nor look at him—she got up and walked to the window.

The lamps had long been lighted, but there were still no signs of Sir John. Rosabel seemed recalled to all her anxieties about her father's arrival. She returned and spoke to Mr. Ashbrook; but it was only to ask about Hubert—where he was? and why he did not come to-night, to meet his father at the Lady Anna's?

Her constrained, almost loathing manner to Francis was well explained to Lady Anna; but was accounted for by Eustace, by the impropriety of Mr. Ashbrook's conduct on the preceding evening—and he rejoiced to see this proof of spirit and delicacy, united to other qualities of the highest interest, in a character which his ardent imagination had already endowed with many virtues, of which at present only the seeds were sown in Rosabel's pliant but noble nature.

Mr. Ashbrook liked his reception so little, that he staid not long; and his departure was succeeded by Sir John's arrival. Rosabel flew down in the hall when she heard the coach-

knock: her hood and cloak had been laid ready for her, as she was apprized that Sir John would not get out of his post chaise, but would take her on to Spring Gardens; where he had taken lodgings, intending afterwards to furnish a house.

Mr. Norman could scarcely keep pace with Rosabel, to conduct her to the carriage. "I have not wished Lady Anna good night," she said, hastily, "nor thanked her, nor you, for all your kindness—God bless you both!" Mr. Norman pressed the offered hand, and silently assisted her into the chaise; where her father, as usual, apparently composed, and at any rate tranquil, sat, awaiting to receive her.

## CHAPTER II.

"How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable  
 Seem to me all the uses of this world !  
 ————— 'tis an unweeded garden  
 That grows to seed ; things rank and gross in nature  
 Possess it merely. That it should come to this !"

HAMLET.

ROSABEL had been some days at home, and enjoying the long-anticipated happiness of all that is comprized in that word, before she was fully aware of the change, in every respect, which had taken place in Sir John's health and spirits. At first, the joy of seeing her, and the occupation of settling their future permanent abode, which was to be completed at leisure, gave an activity and animation to his deportment which were, unhappily, evanescent. Sir John's spirits had sunk when his affairs became disordered, and had never risen again when his circumstances were, in some instances, retrieved ; at any rate, for the present, arranged. He had

always been thoughtful, and abstracted, and extremely reserved. He possessed not the advantage which women have, of being able to expend their sorrows in conversation. His grief, like pestilential vapours, became the stronger for being closely pent up. Even Rosabel saw not all that he suffered, nor, watchful as she was, could she entirely enter into the complicated miseries of parental disappointment; the irritation of pecuniary obligations, the proverbial anxieties of law;—and all the mortifications of an altered position in society. Expectations, early and reasonably cherished, were now to be abandoned; expenses which, to a gentlemanly and generous man, like to Sir John, appeared to himself but to be consistent with his station and family, must be cruelly reduced. It is merely the minutise of embarrassed circumstances that wear away, day by day, the strongest resolution—the most sanguine spirits—damp exertion, and induce such a continued irritation and depression, as are apt, in the most energetic minds, to terminate in despair; first, injuring

the temper, and corroding the best affections—even if the bodily health survive the wreck of hope and happiness.

Sir John's state was, to the experienced eye, peculiarly lamentable, even alarming; his silent sufferings had told upon his frame. There appeared to be little or no disease; it seemed to be what is called a gradual breaking-up—so gradual, indeed, as scarcely to authorize the adoption of medical treatment, or to warrant the fears of the anxious and watchful; yet it was one of those decays which, when once actually commenced, as was thought to be the case, in the present instance, makes no pause, but goes on silently and surely until the last: death seeming but a result of that weakness which has been increasing from the very first.

Rosabel, like most near relatives, was the last to see the change in her father. It was true that the failing and fastidious appetite, the exhaustion after slight exertions, the varying temper, the pallid countenance, and the shrunken limbs, might all have warned her

—but she had seen little of sickness, and the truth did not come upon her by degrees, but flashed upon her mind all at once.

Lady Anna and Eustace, who visited her almost daily, and came fresh from the contemplation of countenances generally healthy and happy, marked, with concern, a change of which they scarcely dared, even to each other, to anticipate the result: the consequences of such a result to Rosabel, and to her family, would, in all probability, be so overwhelming.

Meantime, Sir John and his daughter saw less and less of Hubert. A hasty visit, now and then, generally when he expected his father to be occupied or absent, was all he ever paid to Spring Gardens; and, a sullenness, when spoken to, in an admonitory manner, by his anxious and once affectionate father—a total indifference to the remonstrances of Rosabel, when he did visit his home, rendered those visits any thing but consolatory to the two beings, who were, perhaps, the only individuals



who cherished a real interest in the misguided unfortunate young man.

Mr. Ashbrook, professing to be distressed at his career, was, in fact, secretly, his chief companion ; for Hubert was popular among a circle of the gay and fashionable, who had, of late, somewhat discountenanced Mr. Ashbrook as an acquaintance. He was, in truth, growing a little too bad for the more reputable portion of society, even in that period, when morals were by no means considered as an indispensable ingredient of a gentleman's character : for, perhaps, there was never, in this respect, a much more exceptionable court than that of George the Second—and even of George the Third, until the staid and decorous conduct of the latter monarch, and the salutary spirit of his consort, whose conduct in certain particulars cannot be too highly commended—until these beneficial influences had purified the deportment of the higher classes, the satellites of Charles the Second, or the noblest parasites of Louis the Fourteenth, those courtiers whom

St. Simon has delineated with a cruel fidelity, would not have been complimented by a comparison with persons of rank, at the period alluded to, in this country.

But the fascinating and all-influential Prince of Wales was now rising up into a manhood, which disappointed the expectations of his early days, and rendered what Shakspeare calls the "pleasant vices" not only tolerable in the sight of the community, but popular. He was meant for better things; but the contagion of his example, as a moral man, was long rued with anguish by many a parent, who strove fruitlessly to save his sons from the contamination of vices all too prevalent—all too readily excused.

Sir John was in all respects a strict and regular man, and he now heard, with bitter distress, that Hubert had attached himself to the green-room, then equally, if not more, fashionable than in the present day; equally, if not more impure, but endowed with individuals of far higher fascinations than the female actresses

who now tread our stage can be allowed to possess.

Then, a rumour was brought to the unhappy father, that the vice of gambling was added to the catalogue of other follies and vices. Sir John suffered much upon this intelligence, and suffered, as usual, in silence : leaving Rosabel to guess only, by the disconsolate countenance, and his abstraction in society, and his dejection when at home, that the 'iron had entered his soul.'

It was in this state of affairs that, one morning, Mr. Ashbrook visited his cousins.

"Have you heard the news to-day?" was his first question: Lady Anna, Hubert Fortescue has been superseded; he was absent without leave: he would have been cashiered, but on account of his family they spared him: it is in the paper to-day."

Eustace, who was writing at a table, came forward instantly, with a great agitation of manner.

"Good God! it must not be allowed! it will kill Sir John. Can *no* interest save him?"

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“None!” said Francis, composedly;—“if he could have been found—but he is missing:—gone off, they say, with some actress or opera dancer: I have not the slightest idea with whom. Lady Anna, you need not look at me; ‘Thou canst not say I did it!’”

“Poor Rosabel! poor Sir John!” exclaimed Lady Anna, bursting into tears.

“I have a college friend, a nephew of the commander-in-chief,” said Eustace, looking about for his gloves and buttoning on his coat.

“’Tis of no use, Eustace—every thing has been done; he has been missing a week, and, in common cases, the affair would have blazed out at least five days ago; but the duke’s secretary knew something of the father, and so indulgence was shewn. Sir John knows about it; he sent to speak to me last night: of course he is terribly cut up;—but what could he expect? Hubert never had much ballast—in short, I always took him to be little less than a simpleton.”

“You seemed disposed enough to associate with him, nevertheless,” said Lady Anna, bitterly.

“ But, upon my word, I did not think him fool enough for all this ; and as to his morals, which my Lady Anna is so particular about, he is no worse than other young men—no worse than myself.”

“ Very possible,” said Lady Anna ; “ I should be surprized if he were.”

“ I shall not be long, Lady Anna ; I will just run to Spring Gardens, and will bring you word how they are,” cried Eustace, his voice failing him, and an expression of extreme distress on his manly forehead. Francis, wait till my return, do, for perhaps you can be of use.”

“ What use can I possibly be ?” said Francis, yawning ; “ true, I would do any thing for Miss Fortescue, she is such a fine girl ; but then the old father wanted to draw me into the scrape, and insinuated I must know where his son was ; and seemed so heart-broken about the lost sheep, that I dare say he will set off after it to-day.”

“ Unhappy father !” exclaimed Lady Anna—“ unhappy young man ! to meet with such acquaintance, such counsellors !”

Francis heard this inuendo unmoved ; for he was too much accustomed to such suspicions as those which Lady Anna entertained, to conceive himself wronged by them ; the best way to receive them was, as he justly thought, in silence.

Meantime, Eustace proceeded to Spring Gardens, and was admitted into the house. He met Rosabel on the stairs, for she had run out, hearing his knock, as one in eager expectations of tidings, either good or bad. She was so agitated, or disappointed on seeing him, that Eustace was obliged to support her into the drawing-room. In an instant, as if some hasty thought had struck her, she withdrew her hand, which had rested in his.

“ Then you know all about it, Mr. Norman ? ” she said, after a short pause : “ My father is gone ! ” she added, passionately, without waiting for a reply : “ he is gone, Mr. Norman—at his age, in his state of health—of such an errand : think of that—no one to save my poor father that ! ”

She broke into such violence of grief as shook her frame; whilst Eustace, almost equally distressed, said—

“ Would I had been here sooner ! ”

“ If he could be found to-day,” continued Rosabel; “ if he could be brought back at once—the Duke, his colonel, says he would restore him, for the sake of my poor, poor father. It is so kind of the Duke : may God bless him ! Soldiers have such noble hearts—have they not, Mr. Norman ? ”

“ Sometimes,” replied Eustace, thoughtfully; “ I hope Sir John has taken a servant with him.—No ? ”

“ No, no ! how could he bear any of his servants to see such an exposure of Hubert ; to witness such a disgrace as that ? Ah ! Mr. Norman, I cannot tell you all the story : but Hubert is not gone alone.”

“ So Francis said,” replied Eustace, looking down ; “ these green-room acquaintance—these dramatic associates ! ”

“ No,” said Rosabel, hesitatingly, “ it is not

that; would it were!" she added impetuously, clasping her hands.

"Would it were! if you wish it so, dear Miss Fortescue," said Eustace; "but why?"

"My father may see him once, but he will never speak to him again," cried Rosabel, hiding her face in her hands. "Oh, it is too, too dreadful! He to be a villain! Hubert, once so innocent! But he must have been led astray; must he not, Mr. Norman? Where is Lady Anna? Why will she not come to see me? Why am I left all alone to tell you this?"

"I will go immediately for Lady Anna," said Eustace, soothingly, "if you wish it;" yet he sat down by her, nevertheless. "Can I not take you to her? It may be some days before Sir John returns."

"No," replied Rosabel, softened, and in a calmer tone; "no, I must stay here; he may come back sooner than I expect him, and I must not be away: he cannot spare me *now*. I know it is very wrong, Mr. Norman," she resumed, after a short pause—"I know it is



very wrong to excuse my brother's fault, or to sorrow for him: but when you have been brought up in the same nursery together—followed the same early pursuits—but you cannot understand it, never having had a brother or sister either.”

“That has been my misfortune; but I can understand it.”

“I was too proud of him—we all were; we all were. We prized him for what was of no value—for his person and his vivacity—for his once innocent gaiety: but I loved him, because in all my little grievances he defended me, and our hearts were in unison; and now, he has been the one to disgrace his name, and to bring his father to the grave.”

“When did Sir John receive the intelligence,” asked Eustace.

“I fear it was last night, or very early this morning; but he told me very little or nothing about it: he only said it would be his death-blow; and I am sure it will.”

“My dear Rosabel!” said Eustace, tenderly

taking her hand, as she gave full scope to her overwhelming grief.

Rosabel started, and turned hastily away. "You are very kind," she muttered, scarcely knowing what she said, "but I do not wish to make others as miserable as myself."

"It is a privilege, such a luxury, even to endeavour to be allowed to soothe you—"

"Ah! Mr. Norman," cried Rosabel, after looking at him stedfastly for one moment, and reading on his countenance the workings of his heart, she stopped short—"nevertheless—"

"What? dearest Miss Fortescue—dearest Rosabel, may I not call you?—what do you mean to say?" cried Eustace, unable to controul his expressions of genuine and enthusiastic love for the unhappy Rosabel. "Let me hear all you would say."

"May I say all?" cried Rosabel. "Perhaps it is wrong—I know it is unusual—but I wish—I earnestly wish?"

"But what—what do you wish?"

"Yet, I don't know whether or not to say

it—it is only, only this. My brother would never have gone wrong had he been happy, Mr. Norman, in his first attachment. He would have been a different man ; but his early love was thwarted, and you see the result.”

“ But what, dear Rosabel,” said Eustace, what is the purport of this speech ? Do you mean it as a warning to me ? Oh, no ! I cannot receive it as such. *I* hope to be happy in my first love, or I am sure it will be my last.”

“ I hope not,” replied Rosabel, mournfully.

“ Oh, that I might have the happiness—the undeserved happiness, indeed—of feeling that I had a right, in this emergency, to comfort and aid you—a right dearer and stronger than that of friendship ; yet, at such a time, I must not urge my wishes—wishes, not hastily, but deliberately taken up, and upon the complete conviction that—”

Rosabel interrupted him. “ Had I never known any one else,” she said, after a momentary conflict with herself, “ had we met earlier—I am sure, Mr. Norman,” she added, pre-

cupitately, " I could have loved you, as well as I have loved——him."

Mr. Norman started back ; for so little had he read her feelings, that he had no suspicion of the secretly cherished attachment of Rosabel for Captain Ashbrook. " If it is so," he replied, with much agitation ; " but I have no right to intrude upon your confidence—at least, it will be a comfort to me to think, that, happen what will, you have already a friend—a protector, upon whom you can rely—that will, indeed, be a consolation to me under any circumstances."

" No,"—replied Rosabel, after a pause—" no—I am not so happy—I should not have spoken upon this subject to any one else ; but I wish to save one whom I honour and love, and of whose many kind acts I am sensible, from having your affections more deeply entangled. *You* will speedily master—you can controul these feelings, which I, who have indulged them too long, never can. I was attached, Mr. Norman, to the noblest of human beings, and I was honoured by his attachment in return ; our

condition in life was suitable. My father would have given us his blessing—all my relations approved—there was no obstacle. But I did him injustice—I rashly believed him to be capable of a great sin.

“ Our short, very short engagement was broken off; and I think, I suspect, at least, that I was the chief sufferer; yet I should have recovered by this time, to some degree of enjoyment—I should have forgotten him. But—but now I never can. Too late, I find that I injured him in thought. That his honour is untainted—that I may think of him without self-reproach—that I may glory in his career without sin—that I may cherish his memory, living or dead; and so I ever shall.”

“ I guess your choice, and I honour it,” said Eustace, in a low tone. “ He is worthy of you.”

“ Keep my secret,” cried Rosabel; “ for it has never been confided to any one but to you. I am sure I may trust you; and I am sure you will appreciate the motive of this confession. We have met too late in life, though neither of

us are very old. I can never alter now ; and if I did, I feel that I am bound, in honour, in justice, if we ever meet again—if Captain Ashbrook ever should return to his native land, unmarried, and should ever wish to—to—I am bound in honour to repair the injustice which I once did him.”

“ I understand,” replied Eustace, mournfully ; “ I think you are.”

“ Be still my friend,” said Rosabel, affectionately, extending her hand to him ; “ why should it not be so ? Will *you* be absurd enough to resent, as an offence, that which is involuntary ? Why may not love, since it is so like friendship, become so indeed ?—Alas ! I cannot do without you—I have no brother now.”

“ You need not doubt my friendship—my devotion, I had almost said,” answered Eustace, turning from her for a few minutes—there was a pause. After which, he said—“ as long as I can be of use, Rosabel, or can flatter myself that my presence can afford you comfort, I

may, I hope, be permitted to stay; but I believe it will be best, for myself, to go away."

They were interrupted, and Lady Anna Norman entered the room.

## CHAPTER III.

“ Oh, gentlemen, the time of life is short ;  
To spend that shortness basely, were too long,  
If life did ride upon a dial's point,  
Still ending at the arrival of an hour.”

HENRY IV.—SHAKESPEARE.

HUBERT, it was discovered, had eloped with the wife of a brother officer ; and, infatuated by this unfortunate attachment, had left his quarters without leave ; and, under circumstances so disgraceful, little mercy could be expected.

He was living in seclusion, with this lady, at Tonbridge ; where his father, after great labour, and a journey of much circumlocution, had traced them. All that Sir John now hoped, was, for the sake of the lady's family and his own, to save a public exposure, and to effect an immediate separation between Mrs. Tracy and his son ; and, fortunately, he had still influence



enough with Hubert, the influence of fear, to succeed in this respect.

After a heart-rending interview with Hubert, an interview which Sir John declared should be the last which should ever take place between them, the harassed father returned to London, deposited Mrs. Tracy in the house of a friend of her father's, to whom he left the management of her part of the unhappy business, and returned, heart-sick and ill, to his own house.

Rosabel was seated in her lonely drawing-room. Twilight, which in London is melancholy, without being serene, had rendered her more than usually dejected; she was pacing up and down the room, recalling, in sad rumination, the past, not daring to think of the future; when her father slowly entered the apartment.

Sir John's griefs seemed already to have eaten into his secret soul, and consumed his bodily strength. Rosabel felt how little she could do to comfort him; except by silent acts of tenderness—nothing. Partly from a mis-

taken kindness to herself, but chiefly from natural reserve, which sympathy could not effectually thaw, he now, when he should have expanded in love and confidence to the only cherished being left him, locked up the tortures of his bosom more closely even than was his custom on less momentous occasions.

Rosabel, by timid, yet persevering enquiries, drew forth from her father some particulars of his journey ; but she dared not mention that which was uppermost in her thoughts — she might not ask what had become of her ill-fated brother — where he was — whether his rank could be restored to him — whether he felt for his delinquencies any sufficient degree of compunction.

The distressing details of the case were, however, sufficiently brought forward in the course of a few days. Hubert was obliged to resign his commission, fortunate in not being brought publicly to account for his conduct ; which, independent of his being absent without leave, was so reprehensible in point of daily regularity, that his colonel could not, he de-

clared, conscientiously overlook his last breach of discipline. The blow fell heavily on Sir John ; but no distress of mind could equal that which he had experienced at the first disclosure of his son's profligacy and imprudence.

Day by day the unhappy father declined. Hubert was sent to visit some relations of his mother's, in Devonshire. Rosabel and her father, alone, of all their numerous family, were left together.

Their evenings were frequently varied by Lady Anna's calm and sensible conversation, and by the society of Mr. Norman.

Rosabel saw, with satisfaction, that Eustace had ceased to pay her those attentions which he now knew would be disagreeable to her. A respectful yet cordial friendship seemed on his part to be substituted for those warmer sentiments which he had formerly betrayed ; a friendship which was almost necessary to Rosabel ; for Mr. Norman, of all her acquaintance, seemed to be most agreeable to her father. Sir John began to esteem him highly ; and, evidently, took much pleasure in easy,

but not trifling, discourse, both with him and Lady Anna.

One morning, when Rosabel walked from Spring Gardens to Berkeley Square, to pay a visit to Lady Anna, she was greeted by the unexpected sight of Lady Lovaine's carriage at the door. Her ladyship's voice was soon distinctly heard by Rosabel as she drew near the drawing-room.

"He'll be cut to pieces; there's not the least doubt of it—scalped by those savages, or hung up as a spy by that firebrand, that rebel, Washington, like Major André—"

"Who was shot," interposed Mr. Norman, tranquilly.

"Shot; was he?—well, he was sentenced to be hanged, which was quite the same thing. My lord's quite ill about it; for we all liked Ashbrook, though he is self-willed, proud, close, and irritable to a degree.—Miss Fortescue, pray, have you heard?—Captain Ashbrook's regiment is all cut and slashed to pieces!"

"Not all," said Eustace, shocked at the effect which these words produced; "only—"

“ Only some twenty officers or so,” cried Lady Lovaine, angrily, “ the rest all maimed ; with their eyes and brains blown out !” she added, looking with a wrathful countenance upon Rosabel. My Lady Anna, I should have been mightily obliged to you, or Miss Fortescue, or any one, for I’m not particular, to have married Ashbrook ; and I really can’t help thinking it hard and strange, that, among all my acquaintance, not one could be found to keep him at home ; and that I must live to see Medlicote go to Francis Ashbrook in my old age. My lord’s better off, for he’s sure to be gone long before—”

“ The only plan will be,” said Lady Anna, “ when Captain Ashbrook does come home, to secure him then : I am quite willing to be put forward as a candidate for such a hand—so brave and loyal. Are not you too, Rosabel ? I fear we shall be rivals.”

“ He will never come home—never !” said Lady Lovaine. “ Miss Fortescue, I hope I see you in good health, and that you find London as agreeable a residence as Hales

Hall, or Ashbrook, or Medlicote, would have been?"

Her Ladyship could speak sneeringly when she was thwarted; and she felt a real affection and pride in Captain Ashbrook; which, as no feminine qualities could sit gracefully upon her, was now mixed up with a certain bitterness to Rosabel.

"Tell me what he is like?" cried Lady Anna: "is he like Francis?—is he handsome?—I never saw him but once, at the Bath, and that was years ago."

"Oh, he's well enough," answered Lady Lovaine, snappishly—"ask Miss Fortescue.—Pray, Mr. Norman, have you seen this new yellow powder, made of turmeric?—the ladies looking all like wall-flowers in it, I am told.—I am sick of the subject—tired of talking of Ashbrook and his follies—and other peoples' follies," she added, turning from Mr. Norman to Lady Anna.

"That is Francis," said Lady Anna, as a knock was heard at the street door.

"Then, for Heaven's sake," cried Lady

Lovaine, "don't say a word of your or my opinion of the gazette of the day ; it will make him so happy, and I abhor him."

"You are not singular," thought Rosabel, "in that respect."

Mr. Ashbrook entered, bowing with profound respect and gravity to Lady Lovaine ; between whom and himself there had been a feud of some years' standing.

"Good morrow, Mr. Ashbrook.—My lord's prodigiously well just now, Lady Anna—has taken a new lease of life, and we are only going to Brighthelmstone for our diversion—we are both vastly fond of the sea."

"What a gratifying account," Mr. Ashbrook began, with great obsequiousness of manner.

Lady Lovaine bowed distantly. "It is gratifying to us to hear, Mr. Norman, that Captain Ashbrook has his majority : he will bring a vast deal of honour back to add to the family hereditary honours. It is not idleness and dissipation which will keep up a name—balls and strawberry leaves will not do every thing."

"A good deal, to my mind," said Mr. Ashbrook, deferentially.

"You—you think so?" answered Lady Lovaine, with contempt depicted on her countenance. "It is remarkably generous, indeed, in you, to uphold the peerage, seeing that it is little likely that you will ever bring *your* honours to grace it. My lord's an excellent life, Mr. Norman; and there is one comfort with him at the coast—he makes no exceptions to sea-water."

"My best wishes of duty and respect attend his lordship," said Mr. Ashbrook, bowing, as her ladyship made her way to the door.

"You are vastly civil, Mr. Ashbrook; I will present your best wishes to my lord, and hope he may be allowed to return them in kind: your duty—which is (excuse me) like a fiction in law—I will also present, and will not trouble you to present either your wishes or your duty in person." She made her exit, and left all the party, except Rosabel, disposed to be merry at her expense.



“What is the news about Ashbrook, to which her ladyship refers?” enquired Mr. Ashbrook.

“Oh,” said Lady Anna, “there has been some talk of an engagement; but Captain Ashbrook, like the rest of the world, must take his chance, you know. Rosabel, dear, what ails you? Come, I have much to talk to you about. To-morrow I set out for the country, where I should be indeed delighted if you would join me.”

Spring, joyous spring, was, this year, to Sir John and Rosabel, a long, and wearying, and grievous season. They had never before passed the warm fine days in London, where the spirit, longing to be free, among groves, or in the fields, frets and fevers the body. Rosabel spent her mornings in lassitude, and, by degrees, all the little sources of variety to her existence, one by one, dropped off. Lady Anna rejoined her father at his country seat: Mr. Ashbrook had long absented himself from the house—of him they only heard occasionally. Mr. Warburton was enjoying himself

still, as a bachelor, at Cheltenham ; Eustace lingered, long after the usual period of his remaining in London, and sometimes, but not frequently, surprised Rosabel in her solitude : but, at last, he too disappeared, with an assurance, however, of a speedy return.

Sir John had been frequently recommended to try the effect of a change of scene ; but this, without assigning any reason to Rosabel, he incessantly negatived. She guessed the cause of his refusal—it would be expected, if he left London on the plea of health, that he should visit his eldest daughter ; and Rosabel rightly conjectured that her father could not brook returning to his native county as a visitor merely, nor, perhaps, as a visitor to one so little able to soothe, by address, or by sympathy, his by-gone mortifications, as Mr. Spooner. “ We may well,” thought Rosabel, “ avoid Shropshire ; Philip abroad, unable, from his difficulties, to return home—our home shut up—and Hubert disgraced.”

May, June, July, passed away, without any incident to vary the monotony of Rosabel’s life,

or to improve Sir John's mental, and bodily, and temporal condition. August came—Rosabel, strange to say, found it a relief that the days were shortened. Sir John was not able to encounter the evening air, and frequently dozed in the evening, or betook himself to a newspaper. Rosabel, often, in her heart, blessed those two friends, who had, of late, taught her to value and enjoy reading. But reading will not always raise the spirits, nor even divert the thoughts; and, especially, books of improvement require the stimulus of society to keep up the incentive to self-culture, which, except in minds early well exercised, seems to have its chief object in the approbation of others. It was too hot to walk in the day—it was too damp, Sir John thought, to go out in the evening. Rosabel watered green boxes full of mignonette at the drawing-room window, picked off the smoky dead leaves of a few geraniums, and when she had nothing more to do which reminded her of the country, was forced, to catch a breath of fresh air, to betake herself to her bed-room window, to gaze, from

her attic, upon opposite attics, or to count the chimney tops, or to watch the lighting of the lamps, until the deep tones of some neighbouring church, or the wailings of some dolorous street-organ, plunged her into melancholy; and she sat, until the moon-beams, superseding the lamps, gleamed into her chamber, and made her feel how late it was.

There was no intimation of the likelihood of Captain Ashbrook's return; war still cast its blight over the New and Old World: Rosabel had no opportunity of ever hearing any details connected with one whose return seemed now the event which would decide her happiness or misery for life.

September came, with its harvest moon, and the town was still more deserted. Sir John, at last, weary of himself and of London, proposed a short excursion into the country, and Rosabel joyfully seconded his wishes. The day was fixed, the carriage which, from motives of economy, had been long disused, was now sent for, and all the packing-up completed, chiefly by Rosabel herself—too happy to be

thus employed—and, of late, from necessity, become useful in common matters; but, on the appointed morning, elate with expectation, and early astir, she was summoned to Sir John's room. He was sitting in an easy chair when she entered, and evidently in pain. Rosabel was struck dumb when she looked at him: it was obvious that some active disease had attacked her father. It was now that the first notion of danger had occurred to her—and the first idea of danger to a beloved object is, of all the circumstances of illness, the most difficult to be borne. As a fatal disease proceeds, we become accustomed to all its mournful changes, and threatening apprehensions:—we waive the future altogether—we look but to present relief: the cares which soothe the patient are a solace and an occupation to us. It is when first we see the quicksand on which our hopes must perish, that all our fortitude is required.

Rosabel shed no tear, nor uttered any exclamation of dismay: her character rose with the exigencies of the time. After a moment's

pause, she went up to her father, and, knowing how much of revival depends upon hope, she even smiled, or tried to smile, as she bent down by him, and kissed the hand, already wasted, alas! by latent disease. Sir John, for the first and last time, in Rosabel's presence, gave way to the weakness of tears. He knew, or thought he knew, his own destiny—an instinctive consciousness of irremediable disease told him that he and Rosabel must part. She had now been, for more than a year, his chief, and almost sole, companion, pining not for any change which could take her from him. She had silently wound herself round his heart, by every gentle, filial office, every effort to avert objects of pain, and to present images of cheerfulness, which, with her limited means, she could exert. Since his health had become impaired, for months, how undeviating, how tender, had been her cares, not proffered as duties, but as the result of a devotion too deep for words to express. But they must part—the father must leave his child—and to what? Who was there to cherish her, as he had done? How was she to be placed

beyond dependance—even beyond insult? He knew now, to the full, her kind heart; but there were few others who did appreciate it: she, of all her relations, had only *him*, who, perhaps, loved her as she merited.

Rosabel read his thoughts; she saw that her father's fortitude was shaken: but he had a brave heart, a spotless conscience—and the weakness passed away. With an effort, Sir John repressed what he deemed an unworthy indulgence; and through weeks, nay, months, of suffering, slow consuming disease, hard enough to witness, harder to bear, the weakness never again, to all appearance, returned.

## CHAPTER IV.

“ There's nothing in this world can make me joy :  
 Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale,  
 Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man.”

KING JOHN.

AND now, Sir John Fortescue's case being pronounced dangerous, though not one of immediate danger, relations and friends flocked around him, to pay him the hurried tribute of attention, which in some cases had been of late remitted. Mr. Spooner and Charlotte hastened to town; but their feelings were too acute to remain long. The sight of her father made Mrs. Spooner nervous; and Mr. Spooner could not be away from home in the shooting season. Mrs. Spooner, for the sake of her family, felt it a duty to take care of herself—her family comprising her husband, herself, and her children. She envied her sister Rosa the power she had of doing so much: but Rosa had always been



so strong. It was so dreadful to think how long Sir John might continue in this state ; so, after a time, she found it a duty to go home.

Then came Mrs. Waldegrave and Aunt Alice, officious and dictatorial as ever : but the sight of their thin repulsive faces and grey eyes, fixed upon him, was anything but soothing or cheering to the poor invalid. Both of these ladies were what they termed extremely attached to their brother : that is to say, they could croak for hours together over his complaints and misfortunes when they were absent from him ; and, in his presence, they thought it etiquette to look as disconsolate as possible—to administer his medicines with a shake of the head, which seemed to say, “it is of no use”—and to bemoan poor dear Sir John’s not being allowed to eat or drink ; kept so very low ; none of the Fortescues could stand that ! and then they had a heap of old-fashioned, narrow prejudices, which furnished a perpetual series of regrets and condolences. Mrs. Waldegrave standing fast to what she called her “experience :”—“my experience of this — my experience of that.

My lady this—her similar case ; and my lord that—precisely a similar case ; and when poor dear Mr. Waldegrave was ill, he was ordered this, and I insisted upon that ;” until the clear-sighted physician in attendance—more clear-sighted than courteous—lost all patience, not only with Mrs. Waldegrave, but at the very mention of the dear, departed, harmless Mr. Waldegrave himself.

Anon, it was rumoured, and Rosabel heard it with a beating heart, that Lady Lovaine was returned to town. Sir John expressly entreated not to see her ; so, with some difficulty, she was kept from forcing her way into the sick man’s chamber. Rosabel, upon hearing her ladyship one day announced, went down stairs, by her father’s desire, to see and to apologise, &c. &c.

Lady Lovaine, Mrs. Waldegrave, and Aunt Alice were standing in a little group ; the unhappy physician in the centre. He was turning from one to the other, encountering a set of interrogatories, which it was evident he could with difficulty answer with temper. He bit his

lip, hen-pecked as he was; but his countenance brightened as Rosabel approached.

“Do you know anything of valerian in your practice of this disease?” Lady Lovaine was screaming, in an authoritative tone.

“No, madam.”

“Hum! you don’t think it would be useful?”

“Not at all.”

“Have you any opinion of musk—in the last extremity?”

“Not in this case.”

“Hum!—quite puzzled—my notions of the disease seem to be at a stand.”

“Glad of it,” thought the physician, in hopes of walking off.

“Rosabel, why did you not tell me your father was ill—I wish I had heard of it sooner,” cried Lady Lovaine, as if the whole burthen of the unfortunate case rested on her shoulders; “but *you* look as ill as any one can do, yourself, now—bless me! what an alteration.”

“We are none of us strong, on the For-

tescue side," observed Mrs. Waldegrave ;  
 " Doctor, what do you think of the family constitution ?"

" It is like most other constitutions," replied the Doctor, irreverently.

" No peculiarities in the family at all ?" asked Aunt Alice ; who never had sense to know when to hold her tongue.

" No ; no constitutional peculiarities," answered the doctor, hurrying away, and with an emphasis upon the adjective.

" Dr. Doughty," cried Lady Lovaine, hurrying after him, " what do you think, by way of diet, of a knuckle of veal stewed down ?"

" He may as well eat a piece of glove leather, my lady," replied the Doctor, with his foot on the first stair.

" I have heard say, that calves' feet, boiled down to a rag,"—interposed Mrs. Waldegrave.

" Boil them down to what you please," muttered the Doctor, as he jumped into his carriage.

He left the ladies all aghast, with respect to diet and nourishment ; and Lady Lovaine hinted

that *she* could not give the casting vote without seeing the invalid.

“How is my lord?” asked Rosabel, when a pause at last took place in the business of the council.

“My dear, you speak as if you thought he was dying; but no such thing—that would be too good a business for Ashbrook, and I think my lord will survive him yet.”

Rosabel was silent. The turning of a straw, the waving of a feather, would, as the saying is, overcome her now—her spirits were so weak.

“You are thin; take, at luncheon time, a glass of port wine, with salt in it.”

“Thank you; I will—without the salt: but, dear Lady Lovaine, what does Dr. Doughty really think of papa? Has he the same bad opinion of his case as ever? Has he said so to *you*? Do you think another consultation would—could—be of any use?”

Lady Lovaine's hard countenance softened, as she heard these earnest, but hopeless interrogatories, and saw the heartfelt anxiety of the



speaker ; but the love of management—her ruling passion—made the griefs of others less unpleasant to her than they would have been to a less active-minded person. She considered the house of mourning to be her proper element. After a long tissue of recommendations, prescriptions haphazard, and chance-medley advice, she took her leave ; promising to be very frequent in her visits, and leaving Mrs. Waldegrave and Aunt Alice in ecstasies with her kindness, her feeling, her wonderful knowledge of medicine, her interest in the family—then, her own fine constitution so well preserved, and my lord such a wonder, after years of such poor health ; and so they went on, until Rosabel, who had come down stairs with the heartache, went up with the headache also.

A few days more, and Mr. Lermont arrived, to see, and to plague his old friend, and his old friend's daughter. He was, at first, much cast down at the change in Sir John ; but, ever sanguine, his spirits revived, especially on finding that Hubert had lost his commission. It would now be his business to get another for

him ; and, accordingly, the old man set about it with all the zeal, and all the indiscretion too, of youth. He was trotting off every day to the Horse Guards, worrying the commander in chief's secretary's secretary, or chasing one great man, or petitioning another ; and then he had private appointments and mysterious messages, of which Rosabel could not divine the reason. The house was besieged by porters and footmen bringing answers to his several applications ; whilst the good old gentleman himself was eternally in and out ; unsettled himself, and allowing no one else to be settled.

Thus matters went on, until Lady Anna returned to London, and, with her, Eustace and Francis Ashbrook. By this time, Sir John had made those arrangements of which his lingering illness had given him, to all appearance, warning to prepare. He had completed all his worldly arrangements ; and, as Rosabel trusted, he had now only to rest upon those hopes which the world cannot give. Still, upon religious subjects he had never spoken. His habitual

reserve clung to him even upon this point. He had always in the observances of religion been exact, and he still was exact. It was true, he devolved upon Rosabel the delivery of the simple but solemn family prayer, which was now read in his chamber ; but, in most other respects, he kept up, at least, the shadow of his usual habits ; read grave books, and newspapers, dictated letters, and admitted, at times, the visits of friends.

Thus Sir John wore away. His figure lost daily more of its characteristics of strength ; and daily he seemed to sink in height. Yet, at times, Nature appeared to rally to that degree that it was scarcely possible that hope should not revive. But the work of decay was going on within. His friends gave him up ; yet it was not by the workings of an insidious disease that Sir John was destined, by an inscrutable decree, to render up a life which had become a burden to him. The evils most dreaded for him, he escaped—such is the finite and erring nature of all human expectations !

There were few persons whose society Sir



John still so much liked as he did that of Lady Anna and Mr. Norman. Eustace was often admitted in the evening, when Sir John was better, and staid frequently until the evening devotions were over. Eustace had acted to Rosabel's bidding—he had dropped the lover, but continued to be the friend.—By no obtrusive tenderness was she led to refrain from giving him the confidence of friendship; whatever he felt, he kept his feelings to himself. It was impossible but that she should see, having once had it hinted to her, how completely she occupied his attention, how devoted he was to her welfare, how painfully interested in all her troubles. But this was all; and Rosabel, gratefully, and without disingenuousness, accepted the daily, hourly services of kindness, from Eustace, as from Lady Anna, and felt the full value, the unspeakable solace of such friendship.

One evening she had left Sir John and Eustace together for a time, and had seated herself to write a letter in the drawing-room. Presently she was interrupted, by Mr. Lermont's

very abrupt entrance. This, and the manner of it, were so common, that she scarcely raised her head. She looked up, however, on perceiving that Mr. Lermont was unusually restless, even perturbed. This was saying much, for he was one of those men who could never be quiet.

“Miss Rosa, dear,” he began, after a short standing reverie, which was quite a relief to Rosabel’s ears—“Miss Rosabel.”

“Well, Sir?”

“You will lose your brother!”

“My brother—what brother?”

“Your brother Hubert,” and the old man covered his face with his handkerchief.

“Where is he, sir?” cried Rosabel, rushing up to him. Mr. Lermont, Mr. Lermont, I say, tell me all—perhaps he is dead—perhaps he is in prison.”

“In prison—oh, dear Rosa,—no, never, whilst I have a guinea to spare, poor boy; but I was in hopes it would all blow over, and he would get well, without troubling you about it; but that cannot be. He has been about London

all the time, and I have known of it. Many a time has he walked with me to the door, and heard the last news of Sir John, of nights—he's not a bad-hearted lad, that, neither"—and the poor old gentleman walked about the room fairly sobbing.

"Ah, poor Hubert!" said Rosabel—"poor Hubert!—He has much of this to answer for. My father has never been well since—but, no matter—he will be happy soon!" she added, clasping her hands and looking up. "It is for Hubert to lead a life of humiliation and of repentance. Poor Hubert, he has no sister to soothe his pains," she added, thoughtfully, after a pause of deep emotion. "I can go to him, can I not, sir?—or, at least, I must, I will,"—she continued, with somewhat of her wonted impetuosity.

Yet she had, at first, heard the news of Hubert's illness with calmness; for, after her father's hopeless state had been fully revealed to her, the worst that grief could do was over—all else seemed light to her.

"You can go to him surely, surely," replied

Mr. Lermont ; always ready to urge on actions of benevolence and imprudence ; “ though he’s only in poor lodgings, not so very far from hence neither. But what will Sir John say to it ? He has forbidden you to mention Hubert’s name—will you dare do it ?”

“ Alas ! I know not what to do ; but surely, if ever it be right to act from feeling, it is so in points such as these. Excuse me, sir, my head seems d’zzy, confused ; I must seem the most ungrateful wretch in the world, never to thank you for all your kindness.—What should we be without friends ?—and who has so much reason as I to be grateful—I who have done so little to deserve kindness ?”

“ What is my brother’s complaint, sir ?” she added, after a pause, in which she appeared to gain resolution to enquire into the details of this fresh affliction ; for she was overpowered by successive and complicated troubles. “ I hope, I trust, his days may yet be spared ; but, if not,—that my father may go first.”

“ He was better,” said Mr. Lermont, “ till

yesterday. The disorder, which, they say, is a one-and-twenty-day fever, was reduced: but that unthinking young scape-grace, Mr. Francis Ashbrook, sat talking by the hour at his bedside, and the delirium, the heat and thirst, and quick, hard pulse—in short, every bad symptom, returned.”

Rosabel considered for a moment.

“Surely,” said Mr. Lermont, with his usual kind-hearted indiscretion, “it were best that his father should know it, and that they met once again.”

“No!” replied Rosabel, firmly. “Such meeting would terminate only one way, in my father’s immediate death, I am persuaded. This time, his will shall be my sole guide. He has forbidden me to mention Hubert’s name to him. I will obey that command rigidly.”

On the morrow she visited her brother.

## CHAPTER V.

" For, hapless, most of human kind is he  
 Who, all unpitied, must his sorrows bear ;  
 Whose sighs ne'er reach the ear of sympathy,  
 But wasted are upon the senseless air :  
 No friend to mitigate his wretched fare,  
 Like dew of heaven upon the drooping flower,  
 To raise his head ; his lonely hours to share ;  
 The balm of comfort in his bosom pour,  
 And lift his beamless eye to Hope's fair promised hour."  
*M.S. Poem.*

HUBERT'S disorder was an inflammatory fever, which, at the period of Rosabel's first visit to him, had subsided into the low state. It had been occasioned chiefly by his reckless and intemperate habits, and partly by the sense of disgrace, which he had felt keenly. Rosabel visited him daily, but in secret. She had now to encounter disease in its fearful varieties : she now saw truly what it is which gives support to weak human nature under the pressure of acute bodily anguish. How different was Hubert's condition to that of his father ! The one resigning life with dignity and tranquillity ; not desirous of quitting it, nor weakly grasping at a blessing so encompassed with thistly sor-



rows. The other, depressed with every slight change which might bring him nearer to eternity ; clinging to existence with the pertinacity of a humoured child, who expects every thing to yield to his own wishes ; beset with half superstitious fears ; and yet, upon the aspect of recovery, throwing off all previous reflection, and triumphing in folly over the terrors of sickness.

To accomplish a reconciliation between her father and Hubert was now Rosabel's most cherished scheme. Hubert was scarcely sensible, weak as an infant, and in a state of debility both bodily and mental. Sir John had long been confined to his chamber, or only occasionally removed in a chair, or perhaps supported by Eustace and Rosabel into the next room, that little effort considered as a great exertion. He could not, therefore, go to see his son, had he been conscious of his condition. In all probability, the offended parent and the erring child might never, in this world, meet again. Lady Anna, whom Rosabel consulted upon the propriety of mentioning her brother's

illness to Sir John, recommended silence ; Eustace, more inclined to counsel all that she wished, hesitated, and thought some middle course might be pursued ; and Rosabel was left to act by her own feelings—perhaps unwise monitors—but which she was prone, in most cases, to follow.

Her first impulse had been to remove Hubert, if possible, to his home, and gradually to bring about an interview ; but, by medical advice, this had been negatived. Eustace and Mr. Lermont were indefatigable in their attentions to Hubert, and Rosabel confided the management of him entirely into their hands. Her perplexities and anxieties were, indeed, at this period of her life, so great, that she often knew not how to support the confusion of mind, and her doubts as to the propriety of her conduct were as difficult to her, almost, to bear, as her other calamities.

For a time, Hubert seemed to recover as rapidly as his friends could have expected ; but one evening a relapse took place : shiverings unexpectedly came on, and the fever increased



to such a height, that Rosabel, who had seen him that morning, was sent for to see him again. It was almost midnight; Sir John, with a trusty servant in his room, had been consigned to repose; and Rosabel, having finished her day of duty, was snatching half an hour of quiet for that species of reading which alone interests the afflicted—the volume in which hopes of eternal peace are held out to the weary—hopes of a future recognition of the beloved in that blessed state, to the bereaved.

“Rosabel,” said Eustace, who came to apprize her of the change in her brother’s condition, as with a quick step he advanced towards her—“again, Rosabel, must I put your fortitude to the test—Hubert is worse.”

Rosabel’s eyes were already moistened with tears; for the words of Holy Writ, which apply to every sorrow, and to every want, had this night struck home to her heart. But she rose as Mr. Norman spoke, and said, in a tone far more composed than he could have expected;—

“Your voice, your manner, Mr. Norman,

lead me to think that he is indeed much worse. I can bear *that*—have I not had to bear his disgrace ?”

“ His frame is so much shaken already,” said Eustace, in a low tone—“ but it is useless to conceal from you the truth—his physician fears that he cannot live till morning.”

“ Oh, my father !” said Rosabel.

“ Is it not better that he should never know it ?” asked Eustace. “ Rosabel, dearest Rosabel, I am under a sacred pledge to you, not to conceal the truth about Hubert. You made me promise *that*—but be resigned—do not witness the sad scene—delirium, you know what that word comprizes—it is better for nurses and indifferent persons to attend upon him. I will go back—I will come again—I will bring you word how he is, dear Rosabel—do not go.”

“ And will not *you* take me ?” said Rosabel, reproachfully. “ Well then, I shall have Mr. Lermont called, and then he will go. Hubert has been erring—he dies, alas ! unblessed—unforgiven, may be by his father !—But he is my brother—his death-bed must not be at-

tended by nurses and indifferent persons only."—And she rose, and checked, with violent effort, all outward appearance of sorrow.

"Must it then be so?" answered Eustace, yielding, as he always did, to her wishes.—  
"Well then, at least, Rosabel, let me take care of you.—You cannot go thus: remember, it is midnight."

"No," said Rosabel, recollecting herself: "I will call a servant to go with me; I think there is some one not yet gone to bed; if not—but I will not disturb poor Mr. Lermont; he's tired and old." She ran quickly up stairs, and, in a very short time, she, with her maid and Mr. Norman, were on their way to Hubert's lodgings.

Mr. Norman had a coach in waiting. Hubert's lodgings were at no great distance, and Rosabel soon discerned the half-opened window; a-light, at this time of night—a shadow or two flitted across the white blind. Rosabel became excessively alarmed.

"There are several persons in the room—he's worse!" she exclaimed, grasping Mr.

Norman's hand. "I said I could see him die; but to find him, perhaps, already gone! is more than I can bear." Eustace made no reply; nor could he, when the coach stopped, keep pace with Rosabel; who, passing by him, flew up stairs, and stood breathless before her brother's door. It was half opened, and she saw poor Hubert—his face flushed with that deep red, partial hue, which like a mass of paint settles upon the fevered cheek — his moans, his hurried breathing caught her ear. "He is alive!" she whispered, half turning round to Mr. Norman. She advanced on tip-toe, fearing to disturb the patient: some one stood behind the door—the person, whoever it was, moved a little forward.

Rosabel gave a hurried look at this person, and instantly, without uttering a word, sank down upon the floor. It was Captain Ashbrook.

She was immediately carried out of the apartment, and placed upon a sofa in an adjacent sitting room; but it was long before she could be brought to herself again. When she re-

covered, however, there was no one but her own maid by her side and the physician who was in attendance upon Hubert. Captain Ashbrook had withdrawn into another apartment, with his cousin Mr. Ashbrook.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ Is there no pity sitting in the clouds,  
That sees into the bottom of my grief ?”

SHAKESPEARE.

CAPTAIN ASHBROOK had returned to England a week previously to the events of the evening which have just been detailed—on that very day he had arrived in London. His regiment had been ordered home, having now been in several successive enterprizes of danger, and having lost many of its officers.

Colonel Ashbrook, for such was his present rank, had heard, in the course of an hour's conversation with Francis, of most of the events which had affected Sir John Fortescue and his family since his departure from England, nearly two years ago. It happened that Mr. Ashbrook had promised to visit Hubert that evening, and had been accompanied in


Miss Fortescue's agitation; and though Captain Ashbrook had a great command over the expression of what passed within him, he had not self-command enough to elude the penetration of Francis:—"not that they will in any respect outrage decorum. I don't mean to say that," added Mr. Ashbrook, seeing that his remarks were felt.

"It is no bad thing," thought he, as he looked at the grave countenance of his cousin—" 'tis no bad thing to plague an heir apparent. A man, too, so called up, and bespattered with flattery. Such an honour to the name of Ashbrook, as my cousin Anna told me only yesterday. Hum! he shall not choose a wife from among the daughters of Fortescue—one life between me and Medlicote is sufficient."

Meanwhile, Rosabel recovering her composure, returned to the bed-side of her suffering brother. It was astonishing how much she had, by the too severe discipline of affliction, improved in that self-government, without which the character is as a ship at sea without compass or rudder, tossed to and fro by the

waves and winds, until at last, it not only encounters its own destruction, but involves others in its destiny. Rosabel's fortitude had been of late severely tried; but, unlike the fashion of the rest of the things of this world, it had the property of becoming stronger upon continual use.

Hubert had now sunk into an uneasy slumber: his attendant slumbered also. Rosabel seated herself by his side. The physician was gone; all other friends and domestics had, by the physician's orders, retired. The morning air blew in from the opened window keen and sharp, but it cooled not the parched lip nor heated brow of the young sufferer. Towards the middle of the night he had repeatedly asked for his sister—her name was ever repeated by him; but now, when at intervals he roused to ask in hurried accent for some cooling drink, he knew her not; and the wild, confused stare, with which he gazed at her upon suddenly waking, was to Rosabel most poignantly distressing. But she was little acquainted with





the details of sickness, and reflected not that disease not only levels all distinctions of persons, but impairs the strongest affections, and sometimes even converts them into disgust.

She sat, however, in silence by her brother ; striving to repress the starting tear—her mind reverting in confusion to the preceding hour. *He* was returned : the object of her first, and she believed of her last, affections was returned in safety, and doubtless in honour, to his country. He was returned, and what had been their meeting? He had already left the spot where they had met, with indifference—left her in affliction, without one kind word to soothe her distress. One cool enquiry alone had reached her ears, and the words: “Colonel Ashbrook wishes, before he goes home, to know how Miss Fortescue is,” had grated upon her harassed feelings. “It would have been better, perhaps,” thought she, “that we had never met again!”

“Yes! disappointment is my lot in life,” thought she, as she looked at her brother,

extended on the bed beside her—a sad personification of the wreck of youth, and hope, and health, which his short career had left.

“ Every object that I have loved in life has disappointed me.” And again her eyes rested upon Hubert, and she remembered her early pride in him—the high hopes she had formed of his rising to distinction—the fond vanity with which she had dwelt on his engaging qualities of mind and person.

The sound of the watchman’s voice, calling the hour, now startled her ; it seemed to pass close to her ear — the sound was dolorous, and appeared to her excited fancy almost ominous—she listened to it gradually becoming fainter and fainter, as the solitary speaker moved onwards to perform his destined round.

“ Half-past four o’clock ? Can it be so late ?” thought Rosabel. “ By this time all are asleep—*all* have forgotten me. Oh, would I have left *him* ? Was it kind—was it right ? Was it like our former friendship, to say nothing more ? My father is poor and humble now—we are an afflicted and degraded family ; but



there was a time," she went on saying within her own mind,—“there was a time when my father's friendship might have been thought an honour to any one of his neighbours—when the Fortescues were rich, and proud, and honoured as the Ashbrooks.”

She rose and went to the open window. Thence her eyes rested upon the heavens; not gloomy like her thoughts, but lightened by the placid approach of dawn: that glorious indication of the daily mercies of a forgiving Providence, which maketh the sun to rise upon the just and upon the unjust.

The moon, a crescent, still serenely clear, appeared, in bright contrast, almost to touch the dark pinnacle of a neighbouring church, the spire of which was thrown into the deepest gloom. A single planet shone near it with peculiar brilliancy, which most appears when dawn is nearest. The angular and commonplace features of the street below were all lost in darkness: the vast metropolis was wrapt in slumber.

Rosabel not only felt her frame renovated by

the cool air which played upon her face, but her spirits raised and refreshed by the tranquillizing contemplation of the glories of the heavens.

"And could I dare to complain?" she reflected, as the scene gradually produced its soothing influence upon her. "Am I not re-proved, as it were, by all that I see? Oh, God of Mercy! pardon and support me."

Day-light was now slowly creeping on, bringing with it a revival of hope, which ever, under all circumstances, languishes in darkness. Hubert had slept; his pulse was tranquil, his delirium subsiding. The nurse pronounced him better. Mr. Norman was sent for from the parlour below, to give his opinion; he, too, thought him better. Rosabel saw that he was better; he lay, indeed, an insensible being, but the fury of the fever was evidently subsiding; and, after sitting by his side for an hour, and being satisfied that again there were hopes of his life, she felt that she had other duties to perform, and hastened home, accompanied by her maid and Eustace, and anxious to go

quietly to her own room before Sir John should be disturbed.

It was almost seven o'clock before she reached her chamber, and Rosabel felt little inclined to retire to rest. Overwhelmed by all that had occurred, she could not analyze her sensations: confused and blundering over every little transaction of her early toilet, startled by the sight of her own pale face in the looking-glass, and exhausted both in mind and body, she was but an unfit attendant for an invalid so alive to every variation of her countenance as her father, since his illness, had become.

Sir John, as she entered his dressing room, where he was still accustomed to breakfast, was struck with her unusual, and almost alarming paleness. He made, however, no observation upon the subject, until Rosabel, according to custom, sat down, after their quiet meal was despatched, to write letters to his dictation. It was then that Sir John, with considerable distress, observed Rosabel's hand repeatedly applied to her aching forehead. He suddenly paused—

Rosabel laid down her pen for an instant, and then looked round to her father, as much as to say, "shall I go on?"

"No, Rosa, you seem to me unfit for the task," answered Sir John, in his usual calm way.

Rosabel tried to say, "I can get on very well—I am quite able;" but her lips refused to utter the words. She took up her pen once more; but the effort to write was unavailing.

Sir John looked at her, both with surprise and concern; there had been no fatigue in her attendance upon him to warrant this unusual depression of strength and spirits, and Sir John could not but be anxious as to the cause. Nevertheless, judging that the best plan was to give Rosabel time to recover herself, he took up his newspaper, and said nothing more.

"My dear Rosa!" he exclaimed abruptly, after a short pause—for, as she rose to quit the room, her duties being suspended, she tottered, like a person enfeebled by long disease, or shaken by sudden agitation.



“ Come hither, my dear Rosabel ; we have been accustomed, of late, to impart our sentiments and feelings to each other, with something more than the ordinary confidence of parent and child. Now I know—I see—that some unusual source of agitation at this moment unhinges you : I request to learn what it is.”

Sir John’s requests were always, to his daughter, commands : she turned towards him, and, trembling, said :—

“ You told me not to mention his name.”

“ Whose name ?” answered Sir John, with an effort at self-command.

“ My brother Hubert’s.”

Sir John turned from her :—“ What of Hubert ?” he resumed, in a few moments, in a calm, subdued tone—“ what of that ill-fated, unhappy boy ?”

“ Hubert, sir—alas ! papa, he is ill.”

A pause ensued.

“ What is his disease ?” said Sir John, after musing for some moments.

“ He has had a fever—he has been in dan-

ger," replied Rosabel, hurriedly ; last night he was in danger, and, forgive me, I went to see him : this morning he is better."

" Very well. It is no doubt intended for his benefit that he should thus be chastened. Ill-fated boy !" repeated Sir John—a momentary expression as of severe agony passing across his countenance, and flushing his pallid brow, only to leave it paler than before.

Rosabel felt that she could bear nothing more ; she left the room, and, throwing herself upon her own bed, found, in a long and passionate weeping, the relief which such indulgence brings. But she was not one who frequently encouraged the habit of shedding tears, a habit which unfits us for the active, matter-of-fact business of life, ceasing, in time, by too habitual practice, to afford relief. Obligated, happily, to put a restraint upon her actions and countenance, her griefs had, on that account, borne her down less, for the present, than if she had abandoned herself wholly to its influence. The sufferings of this period of her life were undoubtedly severe ; but they were mitigated, as I



believe they are in all similar cases, rather than increased, as is commonly supposed, by the necessity of putting the best construction upon her own feelings, and, consequently, of tutoring herself to dwell as little as possible upon her miseries.

She was aroused from a state of repose, which had succeeded the indulgence of her highly-wrought feelings, by the intelligence that Lady Anna and Mr. Norman were below, and wished particularly to see her. On approaching, however, the drawing-room, sounds of others' voices also greeted her ears. There was the tremulous treble of Aunt Alice, and the scrappy notes of Mrs. Waldegrave. These ladies, be it stated, had encamped themselves in lodgings nearly opposite Sir John Fortescue's house; thus they avoided what was too much for their poor nerves, the remaining constantly in their poor dear brother's presence, and in the way of every distressing change, and obliged to encounter every harassing and fatiguing duty; whilst, at the same time, they had the advantage—an advan-

tage Mrs. Waldegrave considered it to her brother's family too—of being able carefully to superintend Sir John's concerns. Miss Alice, whilst at her work, could see every one who went in and came out; whilst Mrs. Waldegrave could have the consolation of observing that still some persons of rank and condition thought it worth their while to step into poor Sir John Fortescue's door, to enquire after his health, and that, even, of Miss Fortescue.

And now Rosabel, with a sort of chill, stopped, irresolute, on the stairs before entering the drawing-room; she was not in that delightful up-rising state, which enables one to meet with dignified composure, contumacy, at best, self-sufficiency. Her spirit, sometimes too high, was now too low to encounter those who were all-wise in their own sight: formerly, it had made her irritable to do so; now, it depressed her.

She heard, partly with dismay, partly with anger, Mrs. Waldegrave saying, "Reconcile! indeed! I wonder my Lady Anna could sanction such a thing; she, a pattern of propriety

and virtue herself.—Don't drive me to particulars, Lady Anna."

"I do not desire to drive you at all, Mrs. Waldegrave," was Lady Anna's half-satirical reply; "I believe it would be impossible."

"Mr. Norman is, I am sure, far too exact in his own conduct to excuse a scape-grace, or to wish *him* to be introduced into the family again."

"One of the family he ever must be, whether owned or disowned," answered Mr. Norman.

"And, if I mistake not," said Lady Anna, "he lives in the heart of one very dear to us : Eustace, I mean Rosabel."

"They were always much alike, *I* thought," said Mrs. Waldegrave, contemptuously.

This was more than Rosabel's spirit could bear; a sort of double reflection upon her and Hubert, and she walked, with the haste of indignation, into the room. There was a silence; but Rosabel's warm feelings were turned into another channel when she saw Eustace, and remembered all the events of the preceding night, and read, in his dejected, yet kind deport-

ment all the hopelessness which Colonel Ashbrook's return had confirmed. Her heart, indeed, smote her on his account, and, for the time, she forgot Mrs. Waldegrave.

Mrs. Waldegrave had now ceased to treat Rosabel as a child ; but a sort of distant, formal politeness, as to Miss Fortescue, marked her behaviour to the present head of Sir John's house. Aunt Alice, of course, followed in the same train. They met, as usual, with a cold ceremony, and no mention was made of the events of the preceding evening.

Lady Anna, though she had come avowedly for a few moments only, staid, and staid ; but it was hopeless to outstay the two aunts : so she prepared to go ; but Eustace lingered behind, induced by a word, a kind look, from Rosabel to remain : and at length the old ladies departed, saying, as they left the room :—

“ So ! Colonel Ashbrook is come back, they say ; invalided, I am told, though not wounded. I hear he looks shockingly, and that there is little doubt of another campaign killing him.”

“ And my Lady,” continued Aunt Alice,

“ says, that go he will—next year—he is wedded to his sword.”

Rosabel strove to seem unconcerned.

Lady Anna said, gaily, “ Well, I think it will be scandalous if no English lady can transfix his heart, and keep him at home : Rosabel, it is quite a duty for some one to fall in love with him. I am half-way—for I admired him before I saw him ; and now I have seen him, I admire him ten times more.”

“ Yes,” said Rosabel, with a faint smile, “ he is very much to be admired ; but he is quite right to chuse the path he has selected ; it suits him best, I dare say. He must know best how to consult his own inclinations.”

“ There is no doubt of his going—that’s a settled thing,” said Mrs. Waldegrave.

The ladies withdrew, and Eustace and Rosabel were left together.

“ Mr. Norman,” said Rosabel, with more than usual timidity, “ may I ask once more your good offices ? Will you speak to my father of Hubert ? Will you tell him of Hubert’s sentence, and his sufferings ? He will not, in

your case, attribute it to partiality: to you he will listen."

Eustace promised to do all that he could; and he had the rare art of interesting himself in the affairs of others, without an impertinent interference. Rosabel had, in the course of the morning, the comfort of hearing that Hubert was not worse, although the fever was still high, and some of the symptoms were urgent.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ ———— Alas ! this gentleman,  
 Whom I would save, had a most noble father.”  
 SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Rosabel entered her father's dressing-room on the following morning, she found him, in his usual, composed manner, ready to receive her. He said, “ Rosa, I have taken a very sudden, and, it may be thought, a very strange resolution. I am better to-day : I mean to see Hubert. You are easily overcome, Rosa. Do not fear, my love ; it will do me no harm. My disease is not of an acute or violent kind ; but fevers, of all sorts, are uncertain in their results.”

“ I know it—but Hubert is better.”

“ So I am told—but one of us may go hence, if we lose the present moment, and never meet again. Mr. Norman has promised me to pre-

pare Hubert for my visit—he will attend that unhappy, wilful boy—and he could not have a better adviser.”

“No!” replied Rosabel, with enthusiasm.

“And now one word more, Rosa; come here. You know I have never controuled you in respect to matters of affection; should you marry, I wish your own choice to be entirely consulted. I could have wished, Rosabel, that your inclinations and my own notions had, in regard to one individual, agreed; but you were right to refuse a man to whom you could not give your affections: and I dare say you have never repented acting as you did.” He paused, and a silence of some duration ensued. “I am right, am I not, Rosabel—you have not repented?”

“Well, well—I shall not intrude upon your confidence; I shall not force a reply. My dearest Rosa, dearer to me, because better—because more dutiful, more affectionate, than any of my children,—you know not how constantly your happiness is the subject of my thoughts. I think I see, I guess, you will be



happy. I own I wish it, Rosa ; I own it would be a comfort—a relief to me, to see you rewarded, and to see you reward the tried, the genuine, honourable attachment of Mr. Norman.”

“ Papa, it cannot be ! ” answered Rosabel ; she wept as she spoke—“ and besides, why should you wish it ? You will recover : you will not like to spare me, shall you ? You are better now ? Oh, let me still be your solace and comfort, my dear, dear father ; your happiest, your most honoured, as you say I am your dearest, child ! Do not talk to me of marriage ! ” she added, throwing her arms around her father’s neck. “ I am not fit for it, nor for any thing but nursing and loving you ; but I am wrong—you will have much to agitate you to-day.”

Sir John looked at her in silence : “ My days are numbered, Rosabel,” he said, calmly ; “ but do as your inclinations dictate—that will please me.”

“ Oh, my father ! had I always followed your inclinations, not my own,” replied Rosabel, “ I should, I am sure, have been happier—had

I confided in you earlier ; but papa, I distress and agitate you—you will have so much to encounter to-day.

“ Withdraw, then, Rosabel, and, at the appointed hour, I will send for you.”

Rosabel went into the drawing-room, where Mr. Lermont was waiting to speak to her before he went out.

“ You have seen Colonel Ashbrook last night ?” was the old gentlemen’s first query.—“ Well, and what say you to his looks ? I am told they are sad indeed—he has visited you this morning, of course.”

“ No,” replied Rosabel ; I saw him but for a moment ; I do not expect, for the present, to see him again.” She walked towards the window.

“ I have a plan in petto, dear Miss Rosa—come, cheer up—Hubert’s mightily better, and will get on vastly well after all is at peace with him and Sir John.—Ah ! you don’t know how things may go on yet. I have a scheme to get Colonel Ashbrook to speak to Colonel C——, who will speak to General D——,

who has the ear of the Commander-in-chief, to get Hubert a commission in the 24th; and the poor lad may be made yet."

"I hope," said Rosabel, earnestly,—“I beg—I pray, sir, that no solicitations may be made, in behalf of any one of our family, to Colonel Ashbrook, of all persons. I know your kind intentions,” she added, her manners softening: “I know your goodness to us all; but pray, in this matter, take no steps. Of all persons,” she resumed, with warmth, “I should dislike being obliged to Colonel Ashbrook.”

“What!” replied Mr. Lermont, surprized,—“Sir John’s old friend!—your own warm admirer once!—We must set this matter to rights, Miss Rosa; there is some explanation wanted here. The Colonel must be made sensible that there *is* a coolness. I am sure his enquiries were most polite and pleasant to-day, and, I thought, more ceremonious than formerly; which was meant, surely, for a particular compliment. I will make it my business to see him in private.”

“Oh, sir!” cried Rosabel, “I shall be so

obliged to you, so indebted to you, if you will do nothing—say nothing—not mention Hubert, nor our concerns ; nor my name, in particular, to Colonel Ashbrook. What can he know or care about us now ?” and her face was crimsoned with eagerness as she spoke.

“ Well, well,” said the old gentleman, soothingly ; you must have your own way, I suppose. And now you do mention it—to say the truth, I saw a remarkable coolness in Colonel Ashbrook’s manner when he made his compliments to the family. Maybe he was disappointed about Miss Charlotte ; and disappointments, you know, don’t improve the temper—but ’tis two o’clock, and I have a poor drudge of an author, a man of first-rate talents, nevertheless, that I am to meet at the bookseller’s, and to carry him with me to Lord ——, to be introduced, for a dedication. Then, at three, I must be at the Horse Guards, where—can’t I do any thing for Hubert—seeing Colonel Ashbrook first ?”

“ No, nothing—nothing—nothing,” replied

Rosabel, coaxingly ; “ promise me you won’t,” laying her hand upon Mr. Lermont’s shoulder.

But the intimation that Sir John was ready, broke off the discourse. Mr. Lermont sallied forth into the streets, on his missions of benevolence ; for which, poor man, he received but little thanks ; and the benefit of which, to others, even when accomplished, was very questionable. He paced on to the bookseller’s, where, as Rosabel’s evil destiny would have it, he encountered Colonel Ashbrook.

“ I am looking over what has been published since I left England,” said the Colonel : “ I want to replenish myself with a little information, not quite so antiquated as the year -78-. Biograghy, or scandal, which are, in these days, synonymous terms—poetry, plays, or the last religious mania in vogue—even the Anti-Popery tracts will be new and interesting to me, if they are so to no one else.”

“ You are looking ill, Colonel !” said Mr. Lermont, anxious to dive into the source of Colonel Ashbrook’s loss of spirits, which, he

was told, had rather failed him more and more, than been revived, by meeting his old friends and associates again.

“And yet it must be vastly gratifying to come among your numerous family and friends, laden with honours, and so pleasantly welcomed on all hands.”

Colonel Ashbrook bowed, turned over the leaves of a book, and was silent.

“You will not be for going back again, in these evil times, Colonel, I fancy, as yet? Your regiment’s all landed by this time, I suppose?—terribly broken down, poor fellows, I hear; and, as I observe, Colonel, you have had a slight gash above the right temple; and you are a little lame, I perceive. Now that is really lamentable for one who was, in former days, so fine a dancer.”

Colonel Ashbrook smiled. “I never remembered that inconvenience before; at any rate, my dancing days are over.”

“And then,” resumed Mr. Lermont, “such sad changes among all the friends who could make those diversions agreeable; for I fancy,

like me, Colonel, you cling to old friends.—There's poor Sir John—not but what his affairs may revive—he has the estate still, and the ground can't run away.”

Colonel Ashbrook's interest seemed suddenly aroused ; he looked earnestly into Mr. Lermont's face.

“ I was very much grieved to hear,” he began—

“ Are you ? I am heartily glad of it—I am heartily glad you are,” said Mr. Lermont, shaking both his hands, “ and shall make it my business to correct all unfavourable impressions with the family—rely upon it, Colonel.”

“ What unfavourable impressions ?” asked Colonel Ashbrook, surprized.

“ Oh ! my good sir—ladies will have their fancies—their prepossessions—and even that dear lass, Miss Rosabel, is not without her prejudices—her dislikes ; but I shall soon set that matter to-rights.”

“ No !” said Colonel Ashbrook, colouring ; “ if there be any dislikes or prejudices, let them abide, let them remain. I wish no one to take

any trouble to remove them, on my account," he added, proudly, and moved away towards the counter.

"But, my good sir, would you not serve a family in distress, if you could?—would you serve them against their will?"—asked Mr. Lermont, following him earnestly.

"I don't know; I am not virtuous to that point—my disinterestedness is not equal to yours," answered Colonel Ashbrook. "And yet," he resumed, after a moment's pause, "let me know—let me hear if I *can* serve them, without Sir John's, and, in particular," he added, "without Miss Fortescue's even knowing it—I will do it, not only willingly, but with pleasure; but you must promise me entire secrecy."

"My good sir, yours is the character I of all others admire and reverence," cried Mr. Lermont. 'Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.' Not that you shall even find it fame, if you don't like it, my worthy friend—and now to the purpose."

Colonel Ashbrook listened with attention to Mr. Lermont's account of the mode in which



he thought that Hubert might be benefited, and made a memorandum of it in his pocket-book.

“ Sir John, I hope, has expressed no reluctance to accept my good offices,” he asked, when he had finished, with some emotion.

“ No, Colonel, of that I can assure you ; and why heed the thoughtless, hasty, vehement denunciations of a giddy, hoity-toity, sweet, engaging, random puss like that — sure her word’s of no consequence ?”

“ Oh, no !—none at all, of course—but I should be happy to have her good opinion, nevertheless.”

“ Trust to me, sir, trust to me—I’ll set the matter to rights—I’ll tell her the interest you feel in the whole family,” said Mr. Lermont.

“ Indeed, sir, I hope you will not ; you will really oblige me by letting the subject drop ; at least, by never mentioning my name to Miss Fortescue,” said Colonel Ashbrook, eagerly. I have no wish to obtrude myself upon her recollection—none at all.”

“ Ah ! my good sir, there is no love lost be-

tween you—none at all—” said Mr. Lermont, laughing, “ and that is as it should be.”

Meantime, Sir John, supported by Rosabel, had sustained, with a composure which astonished every one, an interview with his son. The duration of this meeting was short ; but it was sufficiently long to shew to Rosabel and to Mr. Norman the influence of a well-conditioned mind upon the bodily frame—the contrast between the calm dignity of conscious rectitude, and the self-upbraidings which enfeeble the mind and render it incapable of supporting bodily affliction with patience. Sir John was now decidedly convalescent : Hubert, though not out of danger, was better. They met, as those who had been rescued from impending death, and had been set so far on their way to health. But they were still in the mazes and trammels of disease : Hubert, indeed, was depressed, like one unused to illness, and gave himself up to despair. Sir John was aware that to himself a relapse of his malady might be fatal ; and they met as those to whom the prospect of eternity might not be far off ; and

parted as those part who may perchance meet no more on this side of the grave.

Rosabel shed no tear, no outward demonstration of her feelings disturbed the forced serenity of her father's demeanour. Her sorrows, indeed, were soothed; the wounds of her spirit healed by this short conference between the offended, but forgiving parent, and his son. Never had she seen her father in a state of mind so exalted and so admirable. The vexations and uncertainties of life seemed to have ceased to trouble him. He was composed, but grave, like one who had higher considerations in his thoughts than the mere sublunary cares of the world, which passeth away. Hubert wept, long and passionately; subdued by kindness—by forgiveness—by the disinterested attentions of friendship—by the unchanged love of his sister—by penitence. But Sir John checked these ebullitions of feelings, and bade him remember, that for one who had recently received, as Hubert had that morning, the sacred communion of the Lord's Supper, a holy composure, a religious comfort,

were the more seemly and becoming state ; and that the tears of the transgressor should have been shed before accepting the sacred elements : that now, joy, and peace, and hope, ought to be, if his mind were really prostrated to God, his portion.

They parted ; and Rosabel accompanied her father home.

“ And now, Rosa,” said Sir John, as she supported him into his dressing-room, “ I wish, by and bye, to be alone ; but I have, first, a few words to say to you. I desire that Hubert’s transgressions may be mentioned no more. If it please Heaven to spare him, he may, I think, live to prove that his father has one son left worthy of the name he bears ;—and that, Rosa, is not a name of yesterday—and, if he dies,”—Sir John’s voice faltered, and a sigh—but it might be the mere weakness of disease—broke from him—“ I trust he will find acceptance where his temptations—where all our temptations, Rosabel, are known.”

“—And now, my own Rosabel,” and Sir John’s voice indeed trembled, as he addressed himself

to his daughter, “you must be yourself—you must look up, Rosa—you shall confine yourself no longer to the lonely sick-room of an ailing, morose old man : you must go into cheerful society, my Rosa ; your tender age must not be blighted by calamities which you cannot avert. And be yourself, my child ; shew that you have somewhat of the spirit of your father’s race, Rosabel—let misfortune incite you to exertion, not depress you till you lose every power of utility in despair. But I am tired, love ; leave me now ; and remember, love, that when Hubert is once better—is once decidedly free from danger—you must seek, and endeavour to enjoy, recreation.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

"It is best to be off wi' the old love,  
Before you be on wi' the new."

OLD SONG.

IN the course of a week, Rosabel was enabled to comply with her father's advice, for Hubert was pronounced out of danger ; and Mr. Norman's attentions to him, and the kindness of his former brother officers, afforded him rather too much society, than too little. Sir John, too, slowly improved in health : Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice expected to be allowed to take their turns, sometimes, in nursing him ; and made it a sort of offence if they were not permitted to do so. Rosabel, therefore, found she had no excuse for not returning thanks, personally, for many acts of civility during her father's illness ; among the rest, her father

urged, particularly, her making a call upon Lady Lovaine one of her first visits.

Colonel Ashbrook, Rosabel knew, was still in London, for his attentions to Hubert had been unremitting, and he had taken the privilege of old acquaintance to talk to her misguided brother seriously and emphatically upon his future line of conduct; she was not, however, aware, that, in compliance with Mr. Lermont's suggestion, he had been interesting himself at the Horse Guards, to obtain, if possible, a commission for Hubert in some regiment in actual service. He had given himself much trouble in this particular, which was the kinder, because his own health had been impaired by toil and dangers, and it required, according to common report, an immediate journey to that spot which was then held to be a specific for every species of disease—Bath. But with all these testimonies of good-will to the family, Colonel Ashbrook had never called upon Sir John Fortescue, nor sent a single message of his intention to call. Rosabel had only, therefore, seen him twice; once, when at her

brother Hubert's, the night when she had fainted on seeing him ; and once he had passed down the street. She thought him altered, painfully altered ; his gait, once remarkably quick, yet always erect and commanding, was now slow and variable, and there was a languor in his deportment, which gave the impression of his being one who was paying the penalty of too severe mental and bodily exertion. But though Rosabel had thus scarcely seen him, she heard of his being continually with Lady Anna Norman, riding or walking with her, or dining with her father, or accompanying her to public places ; and Lady Anna's influence with him seemed to be paramount. She could persuade him, what no one else could do, to take care of himself ; at her request, he consulted an eminent physician whom she recommended, although Lady Lovaine had proposed twenty without success ;—at her bidding he resumed his sable-lined cloak, and though, as Lady Lovaine said, he reproached others, who enforced prudence, with persecuting him, he had no objection to be persecuted by Lady Anna.



Rosabel had heard all this with very corroding, uncomfortable sort of sensations ; she appreciated Lady Anna most highly—but she thought if Colonel Ashbrook did marry any one but herself, she could bear it better should his choice fall upon an entire stranger : in that case she need not be obliged to be happy. In love affairs, Rosabel, like all other women, and men too, was selfish, and after trying to feel as she ought, for some time, she gave it up, and resigned herself to an unamiable state of mind. She went, however, to Lady Lovaine's, not without some desperate wish—some rash curiosity, of hearing or seeing how matters really stood. The idea of Colonel Ashbrook's ever having a female friend, even a favourite—of his feeling the slightest interest in any one but herself—was so new to her—for whatever had been his supposed conduct to Mary, she had always known herself to be the first object in his regard since that—that she felt as if it would drive her mad—and she who had supported real calamities with so much magnanimity, now sank, dejected, or fretted uselessly under

those which might be classed, in some respects, under the head of imaginary, or, at least, of anticipated evils. She was so pale as she entered the vast drawing-room, fancying that the first object of her sight might be Colonel Ashbrook, that Lady Lovaine, who was writing a letter, looked aghast when she saw her.

“Who, indeed, would believe that it was you? Ashbrook,” she cried, flinging open an intermediate door, “come and see Miss Fortescue, and see if she is still the Rosabella you used to admire at Medlicote.”

Colonel Ashbrook came forward; though taken by surprise, he had that self-command which most sensible men learn early to exercise—he bowed respectfully to Miss Fortescue, and if a slight flush did tinge his countenance, it was so slight, that any common acquaintance might have called it forth.

“You are shocked to see him look so ill?” said Lady Lovaine, staring, surprised, at Rosabel, who stood without uttering a syllable, her eyes fixed upon Colonel Ashbrook.

“Ashbrook, you deserve it,” resumed her ladyship, “for not wearing flannel—that cough of yours: though I think it a good deal nervous,—but always, take my word for it, Rosabel, bring the blood to the surface. Perhaps,” she went on, as she sat down again to her writing, “*you* can persuade him—I cannot—my lord cannot—come, you two talk awhile, for I must save the post.”

“You don’t get on there,” she began again, after scribbling away in a vast hurry—“there, that is done—‘Bridgeover Hall, County Salop’—‘believe me, your ever sincere’—what fibs one tells in letters, Ashbrook—tell Miss Fortescue—‘My dear Lady O.’ (my dear simpleton I might say, if I spoke the truth)—tell Rosabel, for we will leave dignity and so forth to Mrs. Waldegrave, about your losing your horse at the battle of —— what’s the name of the place? You don’t know what a hero you are talking to, Miss Fortescue. Well, have you not one word to say to each other?” she suddenly burst out, looking up first at her nephew, then at Rosabel.

"My lady, Dr. —— is below with my lord," sounded at this moment from a servant at the door.

"Vastly well. Request him to stay till I come. I suppose I may trust you two together—you will not quarrel, methinks, at any rate. Colonel, do translate these two words: *haustus hora somni*—Ah! *you* can see without spectacles a little while longer—as if my lord could live upon pills! but these are dinner pills to be sure. I want to speak to him about that—what's this now? Gentian—aye, aye—very well—in that, he and I agree. I must just go down for ten minutes—only ten. You will excuse me, Miss Rosabel—Medlicote fashion, you see, leaving you two together."

She left both parties piqued to the determination of shewing how excessively indifferent they were to each other. Still writhing under Mr. Lermont's hints, and putting all things together, Colonel Ashbrook could not help fancying, in spite of the leaven of vanity which forms an important ingredient in the male character,—he had come nearly to the conclusion that

Rosabel disliked him exceedingly; besides, he had had every reason given him to suppose that she was attached to Eustace Norman. That might, or might not, be the case; but the suspicion was far from enlivening. On the other hand, Rosabel, confused if not agitated, saw in Colonel Ashbrook's manner no hankering after old remembrances—no wish to return to the Medlicote fashion, as Lady Lovaine called it—no symptoms of delight upon meeting again, after a long, to him perilous, to her calamitous, separation: she was, therefore, resolved to rouse herself, and if she must suffer, she was determined she would not degrade herself also.

“Lady Lovaine looks as well as ever,” observed Colonel Ashbrook, as her ladyship closed the door:—seeing that he was at last obliged to say something.

“Oh! quite. I do not see any change in her appearance for the worse, at all,” replied Rosabel; “not any, since we were at Medlicote,” she added, courageously, and with a coolness quite commendable.

Colonel Ashbrook slightly bowed his head.

"My aunt is always very busy," he said, after a dangerous silence.

"Yes; she has such an active mind," answered Rosabel, cheerfully.

"—Which dispels care, no doubt."

"Oh! no doubt.—Hem."

Another shorter silence, then Rosabel began again, growing desperate.

"Have you seen Lady Anna to-day?"

"—Now he really does blush," thought Rosabel; but perhaps the blush was only that for the first time they had ventured to look at each other.

"Not to-day; but I am going there immediately: that is, as soon as—I beg your pardon—I mean sometime in the course of the day."

"Oh! pray do not let me detain you," said Rosabel, rising. "I never wait for my Lady Lovaine, as she tells me to come in and out, Medlicote fashion; and I should be so sorry to, to— Give my compliments to Lady Anna. I am rather in a hurry, otherwise I would wait

for Lady Lovaine," she added, fearing that her haste would look like pique.

"But you will allow me to conduct you to your carriage," said Colonel Ashbrook, coming forward slowly and timidly.

"Thank you; but we have no carriage now," said Rosabel, her mind reverting to the change, which, in all things, had taken place in their fortunes.

"Then I cannot suffer you to walk alone—that is to say, unless your servant is here."

"My servant, of course, is below," replied Rosabel, haughtily, "and I would not trouble you upon any account;—as you are an invalid," she added, in a mild tone; for again she feared she might appear to act as if vexed by his want of attention.

She was getting out of the room, most awkwardly, knocking down a screen and dragging Lady Lovaine's knitting after her, when her ladyship bolted in, her hand full of prescriptions.

"What! going away so soon? Could you

not endure each other's company one quarter of an hour? One would think you had been married for a year or two, I protest. But there is no use attempting to stop *you*, Rosabel. You always will have your own way. That is one thing you have imbibed from Mrs. Waldegrave—such narrow-minded management."

"That girl is ruined," she continued, turning to Colonel Ashbrook, as Rosabel, unaccompanied, made her way, mortified, and, as she felt it, neglected, to the door. "Quite ruined—so down-hearted, yet so obstinate—I don't envy Norman his prize, do you? But I am told she has behaved well enough during her father's illness, and vastly well with respect to that random brother of hers; and so with that and a pretty, or what was a pretty face—for I confess, though my lord used to rave about her beauty, I never could see it, could you?—I dare say they will do well together. She'll make, won't she, a better commoner's wife than a peer's wife? Come now, Ashbrook, there's a good soul, do seal me all



those letters. Pshaw ! you're sealing them upside down—now, good gracious, Ashbrook ! what have you done ? You have thrown the letter into the fire, instead of the spill ! My best letter, which I wrote to Lady Carruthers. I could not write such another !—could not frame it !—never shall accomplish such another again. It was on the death of her husband, and had quotations from Shakspeare in it, and I do not know what.”

“ Not from Hamlet, I hope,” said Colonel Ashbrook.

“ And then to laugh ! But it is that child, Rosabel Fortescue, that has bewildered you. I wonder you should demean yourself to care about her, when she has expressly shewn her indifference. I thought it would be a match at one time — her father no doubt urged it ; but her spirit of opposition is inconceivable—judging by myself—I have a good deal of it, but she has more, and will never have any one that is approved by Mrs. Waldegrave—in which I could quite agree with her—it is obvious

*you* have no chance ; therefore, why waste your precious thoughts upon her ? Even this very day—”

“ My dear Lady Lovaine, enough !” said Colonel Ashbrook, impatiently. “ I have no thoughts, no wishes that way, be assured.”

“ I am heartily glad ; and approve your spirit so much, Ashbrook, that I will even forgive you if you do not marry at all.”

“ Which is very likely,” replied the Colonel—very, very likely.”

Thus passed off the second interview between Rosabel and Colonel Ashbrook ; and for a fortnight they met not again. Meantime, Sir John's health, to the surprise of every one, was daily improving ; whilst Rosabel's strength, on the other hand, declined. This was the theme of discussion one afternoon, when Lady Lovaine, having dragged Colonel Ashbrook unwittingly into the snare, after shopping and tiring his very heart out for some hours, she alighted at Mrs. Waldegrave's door. “ Some people never are out,” said her ladyship, fretfully, as the servant shewed her and her

nephew into the little dark drawing room. Colonel Ashbrook walked directly to the window. A bull-finch and a canary were straining their little throats in the gleam of sunshine, and furnished Colonel Ashbrook with a pretext for standing, contemplating, indeed, the windows of the opposite house. A few myrtles stood on Sir John's balcony; and a rose-tree, forced into precocious bloom by the force of art, had been put out to catch the vernal breeze, and, perchance, a gleam of sunshine. The blinds of the drawing-room were pulled down; but presently, Colonel Ashbrook observed that one of them was gently raised, and the window opened; a fair hand was outstretched, and a rose-bud, which grew low and close to the window, hastily pulled off.

"Miss Fortescue takes vast care of her flowers," remarked Aunt Alice—Colonel Ashbrook started.

"—And I suppose Mr. Norman is fond of flowers too," said Mrs. Waldegrave, sarcastically; "for, there he comes forth, decked out with a rose-bud in his button-hole. It is a pity

but my poor brother knew better than to let him be about the house all day, dandering after Rosabel — and never coming to the positive question."

"Indeed," said Captain Ashbrook, "I thought I heard it was an absolute engagement."

"Why, we really cannot tell," answered Mrs. Waldegrave, mysteriously; "my brother is so very close—and with regard to Rosabel, she never knows her own mind."

"She knows it now, if the language of flowers have any meaning," thought Colonel Ashbrook.

"Come, Ashbrook," cried Lady Lovaine, "we must go home to dinner." "Farewell! I am in a great hurry," cried she, as she ran down stairs; nevertheless, as a sudden whim seized her, and just as if she were in the village of Medlicote, she took it into her head, as she was stepping into her carriage, to set off across the street, and knock, herself, at Sir John Fortescue's door. Colonel Ashbrook, taken by surprise, stood on the pavement oppo-

site to her, looking at her. It was a quiet, narrow street, and Lady Lovaine beckoned to her nephew to cross over to her. Most unwillingly he acceded.

“Have you ever called upon Sir John Fortescue? I think not,” screamed her Ladyship, a high wind blowing in her face and rendering her words scarcely audible.

“Do you think I should?” asked Colonel Ashbrook, hesitatingly; longing to be told that he ought to call, but pretending—for men do pretend to such feelings as well as women—to be reluctant.

“To be sure. Why not?” answered Lady Lovaine, fixing her eagle-eye upon him for a moment. “I can’t stay a minute—so you need not be out of all patience, as you were half-an-hour ago. Is Sir John at home?”

“He is, my lady; but he has lain down awhile.”

“Very well—don’t disturb him. Is Miss Fortescue at home?”

“She is, my lady.”

“Very well.”

" But I had better only leave my card, since Sir John is not visible," said Colonel Ashbrook, drawing back.

" Why ?—No, no—after all, you know, Sir John is as well out of the way—he's so deaf—come, come, come," she added, taking hold of Colonel Ashbrook's arm, and half dragging him up with her.

" Rosabel," she cried, on her entrance, " here is Colonel Ashbrook ; but if you knew what hard work it has been to bring him, you would scarcely wish to see him again."

Rosabel came forward, with some confusion, but yet with far more dignity and presence of mind, than, considering the girlishness of her manners, when Colonel Ashbrook had been in the habit of seeing her frequently, previous to his going abroad. He was struck with the readiness of her address, and the modest ease, and simplicity, yet high breeding, of her deportment.

" How is Sir John to-day ? Nay, don't apologize ; it is much better for him not to see visitors. You keep your rooms very warm ;

and what a peculiar advantage to be directly opposite to those two duennas, your aunts. Why, they can see every one that visits you : vastly agreeable. Have you seen Lady Anna Norman to-day, or Mr. Norman ?”

“ Mr. Norman,” replied Rosabel, slightly blushing, “ has just left”—left *me*, she was going to say—but she faltered, and said, “ left the house. But I believe,” she added, taking courage, and determined to see if she could plague Colonel Ashbrook a little—“ he will be so good as to come here to-night, to remain with Sir John, while I visit Lady Ashbrook—I beg your pardon, I mean Lady Anna, for an hour or two.”

“ A very bad arrangement,” answered Lady Lovaine. “ Why could not Lady Anna come here ? and then you, and—you would all three be together.”

“ Why, that would, perhaps, have been the best,” returned Rosabel, falteringly ; “ but it is all Lady Anna’s arrangement ; it is her doing—she wishes me to go to her—I really do not know why.”

"Ashbrook, you were going there this evening; were you not?" asked Lady Lovaine, rising, and looking about for her mantle, which she had taken off.

"Yes! but I do not think I shall—be able;" stammered out Colonel Ashbrook; for he saw through this contrivance of Lady Anna's, and was proudly resolved that he would neither be forced into Rosabel's society, nor she into his—"I am not well."

"Well—then really," resumed the managing Lady Lovaine, 'tis a sad pity you, as an old friend, could not have borne Sir John company, and released Mr. Norman, gay and young, to the gay and the young. But you will all of you take your own way. Ashbrook, just see if the carriage be at the door.—Of all things, my dear Rosabel, it is the most vexatious and fatiguing to have these grown-up nephews about one; such an incumbrance in the evening, when one wants a nap. I was in hopes I should have been alone to-night, to have settled some little matters of business. I must see if I can turn him out, some how or other—he is abso-



lutely too domestic. Ashbrook, do you hear what I was saying of you ?”

“ Oh, it is so unpleasant to be disturbed from one’s state of quietude in an evening,” replied Rosabel, speaking rather in a louder tone of voice than usual—“ it would be such a pity to compel Colonel Ashbrook to go out. She spoke with malice prepense; for if woman, when adored and caressed, be not always overcharitable, what is she when slighted ? But she spoke in haste—to repent when alone and at leisure.

They left her, and she sat down to tax herself with having been unnecessarily cold and severe, and with destroying, by self-will, her only prospect of happiness. When the hour for joining Lady Anna arrived, she was, therefore, so full of self-reproach, so humbled and disheartened, that she only longed for an opportunity of again meeting with Colonel Ashbrook, to retrieve her errors, by double kindness. But, alas ! he came not—and all opportunity of confiding her feelings to Lady Anna was debarred, by the harrowing suspicion that Lady Anna’s unoccupied heart was engrossed

by a new interest for Colonel Ashbrook. There was an enthusiasm, and a certainty, in the tone of Lady Anna's sentiments with respect to him, which the all-conscious Rosabel could only interpret one way ; and, after an evening of unusual constraint and gloominess, she returned home, exaggerating to herself all the particulars of the case, and endeavouring—but alas ! in vain—to resign herself to the speedy confirmation of her fears.

## CHAPTER IX.

“ He is well paid ; that is, well satisfied.”

MERCHANT OF VENICE

MEANTIME, Colonel Ashbrook, unostentatiously, but effectually, was promoting Hubert's best interests, by giving him an opportunity of engaging in active service. In those days it was no difficult matter to obtain a commission : but Hubert's rash and irregular conduct must, in most cases, have been an effectual bar to his again obtaining rank in the army. It would, however, in these times of necessity, have been comparatively easy to have got him into regiments of inferior reputation : but Colonel Ashbrook was anxious that the young man should resume his former position in society, if possible, and that neither he nor his family should feel that he was degraded. He remained,

therefore, in London, working for this end, and giving up, avowedly to himself alone, for this purpose, his journey to Ashbrook.

Lady Anna, who knew his schemes for the benefit of the misguided young man, joined cordially in them, and had her own suspicions with regard to Colonel Ashbrook's interest in the family. But, by this time, she knew, also, the attachment of Eustace Norman for the same object; and she was by no means certain that Rosabel's feelings were not engaged in favour of one who had been her support and comfort in the day of trouble. She had long ago made up her mind that Rosabel was indifferent to Francis, and that she had been totally deceived on that point; so still she went floundering on, as most ladies do when they begin to be fanciful and suspicious in love affairs.

Mr. Lermont aided and abetted all these arrangements; and, by his hints and inuendos, did as much mischief to Rosabel's happiness, as kind-hearted, busy people, generally manage to accomplish. At last, the matter was settled; a commission was obtained for Hubert in a

most respectable regiment, shortly to march for Scotland. It was just what Hubert wished himself; it was just what Sir John, it was supposed, wished for his son. Mr. Lermont, after hearing it at Lady Anna's, set off to inform Sir John; Lady Anna and Colonel Ashbrook were left together.

They were in close confabulation over the fire, when the servant threw open the door, and announced Miss Fortescue. She came in upon them so unexpectedly, that it was difficult to say which of the three was the most confused. Lady Anna was hurried at the thoughts of the happiness which Hubert's appointment would give Rosabel, when she knew it; but she was, on no account, to be told it was Colonel Ashbrook's good work: Colonel Ashbrook, somewhat agitated too, in spite of his stoicism: and Rosabel now certain that there needed no further confirmation of Colonel Ashbrook's attentions to Lady Anna. Were they not sitting both nearly in the fire, with their feet on the fender, and in the most confidential communication possible?

She sat down and tried to look unconcerned,

and to seem happy—a hard task, with an aching heart like Rosabel's—and her acting was not skilful enough to have deceived any who had not their own previous misconceptions upon the state of her feelings.

“ Mr. Lermont is just gone to your house,” said Lady Anna, exchanging a glance with Colonel Ashbrook ; “ will he find Sir John at home ?”

“ Oh, yes ; Mr. Norman is with him,” said Rosabel, unconsciously. “ But, dear Lady Anna, I wanted to ask your advice—an event has occurred to me, which I should indeed have thought an event some four or five years ago—I have been invited to a ball.”

“ Well,” said Lady Anna, “ you will go, of course : Sir John is much better ; Hubert is well.”

“ Sir John,” resumed Rosabel—“ but I forgot—I ought not to trouble Colonel Ashbrook with my concerns—I fear I have been interrupting more interesting conversation—have I not ?”

Colonel Ashbrook rose. "I shall profit by the suggestion," he said, "and withdraw ; for I am interrupting arrangements, I fear."

"Oh, no," cried Lady Anna, "do not suppose we are afraid of you—do not go away—do not imagine, like all your vain race, that your presence can make any difference to us."

"Well, Rosabel?"

The Colonel sat down again. There was an intimacy of manner between him and Lady Anna which Rosabel thought strange, after so short an acquaintance ; but she thought it was usual between persons engaged, or going to be engaged ; she had so little experience on this subject.

"You don't look as if you were thinking of a ball, Rosabel," observed Lady Anna ; "but I suppose you were tired of those things in Shropshire?"

"No, indeed," answered Rosabel, with well-assumed composure ; "I never went to a ball in my life ; and, at my age, that is much to say—and I really should not break my heart—"

she continued with forced liveliness to say—"if I never went to one at all."

The words had nothing in them; but there was something in the tone in which they were said, that went to Colonel Ashbrook's heart.

"But it is to please my father," Rosabel resumed, in her own natural way; "and I really don't know why he should wish me—why he should wish me to go to gaieties which I have now no spirits to enjoy," she added, hastily; and, running up to the window, began pulling off some dead leaves of a geranium placed near it.

"How warm it is, Lady Anna—don't you think so?—though only March yet—might I throw up the window one moment?—You know Lady Lovaine says I am always in a fever—but this window is bolted surely?"

Colonel Ashbrook hastened to unfasten it; and, catching a glimpse of Rosabel's face, he saw tears upon it. "This gaiety is, then," thought he, "assumed—yet, why assumed?"

Lady Anna joined them at the window.

"Well; and what ball is it, Rosabel?—and



when, and where?"—I wish Colonel Ashbrook and I were invited too. — And what dress are you thinking about? I suppose that is the point of consultation. Come, Colonel Ashbrook, we will take you into the committee of taste—what dress will suit Miss Fortescue?"

"Miss Fortescue has surely better advisers than I am," returned Colonel Ashbrook, gravely.—"She has her own taste, for instance," he added; fearful, on his part, that he should appear to be under the influence of pique.

Rosabel looked at him for an instant: there was a sort of taunt, to her fancy, implied in this trivial remark: her feelings were all in so irritable a state, that she misconceived and misapplied every observation.—"No wonder—he who left me when my brother was thought to be dying—he who gave me no kind consolatory attentions and sympathy then, cannot feel for me now. He has not forgiven me, I see—how different his conduct to that of Mr. Norman!—with what generosity the one behaves—with what littleness the other!"

'These reflections passed through her mind, whilst Lady Anna was saying, all the while :—  
 " But, Rosabel, you have not told us, all this while, where this ball is, and who is to be your chaperon ?—and whether, after all, you mean to go ?—You are absent, Rosabel—positively dreaming," she cried, pulling her friend's sleeve gently.

Rosabel started—" It is at a friend of my father's, Lady Anna—for we have a few friends left," she added, with bitterness. " And perhaps you may know this very lady, Mrs. Dalrymple ? And I think I shall go," she resumed, with a cheerful accent, " provided some friend will be so kind as to chaperon me ; for I declare I would rather stay at home all my life, than be conducted to any thing in the shape of gaiety by my aunts."

" Well," resumed Lady Anna ; " though I do not know Mrs. Dalrymple, I shall, at least, come to see you dressed for your first ball, Rosabel : and, wear what you may, you will not have to sit down for want of partners, I dare say. Now, with regard to the chaperon



—Colonel Ashbrook, do you bespeak my Lady Lovaine's services for the occasion ; she goes everywhere, and knows everybody—and though, I dare say, she will aver that she has not been to a ball these twenty years, you may be able to persuade her to go ; especially if you offer to accompany her—you two ladies will want a gentleman.”

“ Of course,” said Rosabel, loftily, “ we should be honoured by Colonel Ashbrook's attendance—but Mr. Norman will accompany us.”

A general silence ensued. It was broken by Rosabel ; for she felt she had gone somewhat too far in her last speech, and her conscience smote her, when she looked at Colonel Ashbrook's grave and offended countenance.

“ After all, Lady Anna, I don't really think I shall go—I am sure I shall not go—I do not think it would be consistent with all that has happened. It is not for broken-down families to be seen at such places,” she added, suddenly ; “ and what enjoyment would it be to me ? I am sure *I* should not enjoy it ; but I

must hasten home now :—good morning, Lady Anna ; good morning, Colonel Ashbrook.”

“ You must,” said Colonel Ashbrook, quite melted by her careless and open allusion to her family misfortunes, “ you must let me see you home. I will not be disappointed, nor refused, this time,” he added, advancing towards her——“ unless, indeed, it would be very disagreeable to you,” he added, drawing back ; for he saw something in Rosabel’s manner which discouraged him.

Rosabel would have given worlds to have taken his arm ; but she looked at Lady Anna, and was fearful of annoying or vexing her ; and whilst she hesitated, the opportunity was lost ; for Mr. Norman entered. Colonel Ashbrook instantly resigned his claim to her hand, and retreated to the other end of the room. Mr. Norman, finding Rosabel apparently on such comfortable terms with Colonel Ashbrook, sat down, dejectedly. Rosabel was left standing for a few moments ; then, offended by Colonel Ashbrook’s desertion, she sat down too ; determined to shew her indifference.

In this critical position, the voice of Lady Lovaine on the stairs acted somewhat contrary to its usual effect, and provided a relief.

Her Ladyship's first words on entering were :

“ So! Miss Fortescue, your brother is going to Scotland — has got his commission in the twenty-fourth I hear! A mighty good thing! for I don't know what your father could have done with him at home! Sir John's vastly pleased with it. I have just been at your house and found you flown.”

“ My brother Hubert going to Scotland — got a commission in the twenty-fourth? Oh, dear, dear Lady Lovaine! What news to bring me! Oh, Lady Anna! was there ever such happiness? My father will be himself now!” She covered her face with her handkerchief, and the burst of tears, which she could not restrain, was not, for a few moments, disturbed by any remark from those present.

“ Who has,” she resumed, after a pause — “ who has wrought this good, this most acceptable work? Some valued, though unknown,

benefactor! Ah! it can be no other than Mr. Lermont. How often have I wantonly, unexcusably, laughed at his busy, good, benevolent offices; and now! to be one to benefit by it!—Is it not Mr. Lermont? No?”

Lady Lovaine shook her head.

“Then, I guess, and indeed it must be, Mr. Norman,” said Rosabel, blushing. “He has interest, I know; and, I am sure, that whenever he thought he could do good, that interest would be exerted—though never for himself.”

“I protest,” replied Lady Lovaine, “I am ignorant on the subject. The benefactor is a point of little consequence—the benefit is certain.”

“—But I should like, nevertheless,” said Rosabel, “to learn who the kind friend is— whoever it may be, I shall for ever bless him! I hope it is no one whom I dislike very, very much;”—and her mind reverted to Mr. Ashbrook.

“I hope not, indeed,” observed Lady Anna, as she shook Rosabel by the hand, when they separated; Rosabel hastening home.

Colonel Ashbrook remained standing at the window :

“ Pray do not undeceive Miss Fortescue, Lady Anna,” he said. “ She would rather be obliged, I am sure, to any one but me. My interference in the affair would have diminished her satisfaction — promise me that she shall never know.”

“ I will not promise you,” said Lady Anna : “ but, at any rate, she shall not know at present — but, why this over-refined delicacy, and, excuse me, folly ?”

“ Old feuds,” replied Colonel Ashbrook, forcing a smile ; “ certain country jealousies and antipathies, not worth referring to, Lady Anna.”

## CHAPTER X.

" Oh ! 'tis the curse in love, and still approved,  
When women cannot love where they're beloved."

WINTER'S TALK.


AND what did Mr. Norman think of all this? He was indignant, unhappy, and sanguine by turns: he read, in too plain characters, the attachment of Rosabel for Colonel Ashbrook; and saw, as he conceived, that that too genuine attachment was unrequited — that she was slighted, and, he almost fancied, despised. Under these impressions, he could not leave her without the support of his friendship, which she seemed daily more and more to require. He could not help hoping that one day her eyes would be opened, and that she would view Colonel Ashbrook as he did—cold, proud, insensible; and a confirmed bachelor, if not a woman-hater.



Sir John's health was so much amended, and Hubert's prospects were so happily cleared up, that it was a matter of surprise, to those who knew Rosabel but partially, that her bloom, her spirits, her energies did not return with returning peace and hope. In society, she managed, indeed, to give to strangers the impression of indulging in a wild gaiety, which made Mr. Norman's heart ache, and blinded Colonel Ashbrook as to the real effects of continued trials and disappointments upon her character. At home, she had lost all her equanimity, all her cheerfulness. She had borne her previous and serious troubles with a noble fortitude; feeling deeply, but justly, but making others, not herself, the first objects of those feelings. But now her resolution, her very temper even broke down under the uncertainties of her condition. Her nature seemed changed. She became impatient of opposition; averse from sympathy; and variable, and trying in her manners to every one, except to one individual, to whom her feelings never, never changed—her father.

Mr. Norman saw, and suffered from all this; but suffered for it, without one tacit reproach to Rosabel, even in his own mind: for he looked upon her as one peculiarly stricken, though as yet, alas! not wholly chastened by early adversity; and he blamed not her, but Colonel Ashbrook, for her faults. It was fortunate for him, that Rosabel's utter guilelessness—her openness to him—the indifference with which she allowed him to see all her sufferings, gave him but little hope, except in some moments of delicious self-delusion, which we all at times are permitted to enjoy: that, except in those snatches of fallacious happiness, he had ceased to indulge in any sanguine notion that she would ever entertain for him such sentiments as those with which he fruitlessly sought to struggle.

Sir John—though he spoke not his opinions—saw a fearful change in Rosabel's once beaming and joyous countenance. She was now instantly overcome by the voice of kindness, even to tears; and when those tears were once allowed



to flow, it was hours before she could assuage them. This depression she sought to attribute to the approaching separation from her brother: but Sir John expected that she would have borne that parting better.

He consulted Mrs. Waldegrave as to her state; but Mrs. Waldegrave could see nothing the matter with her; Aunt Alice thought it was her late rising; Lady Lovaine attributed it to a dyspeptic disease, which she knew produced the same effect upon her when a girl:—"and, indeed, Sir John," she added, "let me beg of you to send and get 'Indigestion Unmasked,' a new treatise on that interesting subject; when you once begin it, you will never lay it down. Miss Fortescue is worse after eating, is she not? Ah, I thought so! I shall observe her to-morrow, I assure you, when she dines with me to meet Lady Anna, and—pity me!—that young profligate, Francis Ashbrook! I have asked him this once—that is a piece of duty I owe—after which, he need never again darken my doors."

“ Miss Fortescue going to Mrs. Dalrymple’s ball with your Ladyship ? ” enquired Aunt Alice.

“ I don’t know—I can’t say—I will not settle,” answered Lady Lovaine, sharply. “ Ashbrook does not chuse to go ; and, I suppose, if I take Mr. Norman, he and Rosabel will be making fools of themselves all night : I hate engaged people. By the way, Alice, have you heard that Mr. Beaufort has recovered the use of his arms again ; he can squeeze your hand now, whenever you chuse to give him an opportunity—and can advance a leg or so. There’s some hope yet for you, Alice.”

Poor Aunt Alice shrunk back ;—Sir John was too deaf to hear this attack upon his sister’s feelings ; but Lady Lovaine was a privileged person. Rosabel had not made a single formal visit since her residence in London ; but Lord Lovaine had insisted upon having a family party, since Ashbrook was returned ; and she had no pretext for refusing ; nor, indeed, any desire, until half an hour before she went to dress for dinner.

Good Mr. Lermont came home for the same purpose; he had been twice that day to the Treasury and back, in behalf of a friend's friend's son; had called at the Home Office for franks from some of his acquaintance there, in his way. He was tired, and by no means disposed to talk; but said he must just give Miss Rosa one little bit of news, because it would please her exceedingly. "Mr. Francis Ashbrook (who, I can't help thinking, Miss Rosa, is quite the gentleman,) assures me the preliminaries between his cousin and Lady Anna, are next to settled — greatly to his let and hindrance," added the old gentleman. "It's vastly hard upon him—but will be just the suitable match, to my mind. Lady Anna so fine and stately; and the Colonel just such another—quite the commander; and Lady Lovaine will be highly contented—don't you think so, Rosabel?"

"I really do not know, sir—I am no judge; but we shall be late. I suppose we shall see—if such things are to be seen in good society—some symptoms of these preliminaries,"

thought she, as she went into her dressing-room.

She sank into a reverie, and Mr. Lermont was dressed, and waiting before she had begun her toilet.

Dinner had been announced when she arrived in Hanover Square. Lady Lovaine, who had, of late, treated her with something approaching to contumely, was out of humour at the delay; Lord Lovaine was taking some melted jelly to stay his appetite, which, like all the rest of his routine existence, came, by clock work, to the hour, nay, minute. Colonel Ashbrook was making excuses for some one or other, as Rosabel, unconcernedly, walked into the midst of the circle.

"But she never is in time," reiterated Lady Lovaine. "Ha! welcome, Miss Fortescue, at last!" and she pointed to the china clock on the mantel-piece.

"Is it late?" asked Rosabel, looking as puzzled and surprized as if she were dreaming.

"But are you not delighted to see my lord looking so well?" cried Mrs. Waldegrave,

shocked at her indifference to the event of Lord Lovaine's reappearance.

"Quite a miracle! quite a miracle!" exclaimed Lady Lovaine.

"So much himself again—just like himself," said weak Aunt Alice.

Rosabel looked at the much-admired Lord Lovaine; he seemed to her more shrivelled, more aged, more shadowy, than ever; though dressed out in a velvet suit, and his hair in full style, the most was made of him that could be made. It appeared cruel to call forth into notice such a shred of humanity, such a vestige of manhood; the form, without the muscle, the material, the fitting up, as it were, of a human being.

"It is astonishing what art can do;" said Lady Lovaine, with much self-complacency;—"my Lady Anna, you who have so much influence with Colonel Ashbrook;"—but dinner was announced, and dinner was a sound which suspended all further discourse.

Rosabel cared not where she sat, nor by whom she was placed—but she was purposely

seated next to Mr. Norman. She felt out of humour with every thing around her ; and this feeling of irritability extended to him. His very attentions to her displeased her ;—they had become disagreeable—almost revolting, to her. They perpetually offered her the semblance of what she only wished to receive from one individual ; she knew that she was unjust, ungrateful, unpardonable, in allowing such sentiments towards Mr. Norman to take possession of her mind ; but she found it next to impossible to correct them. Hence a feeling of self-reproach was added to her other sufferings.

Colonel Ashbrook was occupied with Lady Anna, and never addressed Rosabel : he resolved to let her enjoy her conquest, for such he saw that it was, unmolested by any attentions on his part ; but when he once, for an instant, glanced at Rosabel, he was surprised at the listless melancholy of her air, and his eyes rested upon her for a few moments with involuntary tenderness and compassion.

“ He pities me ! ” thought Rosabel, who saw



and read his look ;—“ Can I bear this !—but he shall pity me no longer.”

Her manner instantly changed ; she sought, with hurried phrase, to engage in the conversation of those around her ; she endeavoured to appear gay—gay at heart—but, alas ! she was a bad actress, and could not deceive Lady Anna, nor Mr. Norman ; they knew her too well.

Mrs. Waldegrave, however, observed, with a bitter smile, to Colonel Ashbrook, “ What spirits Miss Fortescue has ! Greater than ever—don’t you think so ? ”

“ Has she ? I am happy to hear it ; I was afraid all her recent anxieties had—had abated her original gaiety,” replied Colonel Ashbrook, gravely, but in a manner expressive of kindness towards the subject of his conversation ; for he could suffer no one to depreciate, even by implication, one, to say the least of the case, so indifferent to her own defence as Rosabel,—careless, indiscreet, and, as he thought, capricious, as she usually appeared to be.

“ It is so pleasant when persons can throw

off their cares," resumed Mrs. Waldegrave, with a suppressed sneer: "for my part, I never can or do forget;—my poor dear brother's misfortunes are ever uppermost in my mind,"—in a low tone.

"High spirits do not, in my mind, imply want of feeling," answered Colonel Ashbrook, almost sternly; "quite the reverse; they display a sensibility to impressions, without which no one can possess feeling. Besides," he added, thoughtfully, "there is sometimes a narrow limit between extreme depression, and unaccountably high spirits." He little imagined how truly this remark applied.

"But my niece Rosa," Mrs. Waldegrave began again, "never had, you know, Colonel Ashbrook, the sweet composure and pretty manner of her sister, Mrs. Spooner, whom you used to admire."—For it was now the prevalent opinion among 'the set,' as Mr. Ashbrook called them, that Colonel Ashbrook *had* thought of proposing for Charlotte; but had left it, as most old bachelors do, too long, and let the



opportunity go by ; a folly of which many agreeable men are guilty all their lives.

Colonel Ashbrook was silent. He never had admired Mrs. Spooner, he never had thought her nearly equal to Rosabel, either in person, mind, or disposition. But of what avail was it now, to him, to draw comparisons and to deduce, in his own mind, the inference, that of all women whom he had ever seen, Rosabel was the only one to whom he could now attach himself? For he scorned the idea of soliciting, by any pioneering attentions, a regard which had been contemptuously refused on her part, after a wanton encouragement of his hopes—refused, with circumstances of aggravation, almost of insult.

It were often to be wished that there were some invisible spy, gnome, sylph, or fay, who could wander, not from tea-table to tea-table, for such things are now exploded, but from one gay assemblage to another—correct misunderstandings, clear up doubts, reconcile differences, reduce inflammatory irritations—offices which

a grain or two of openness and candour, mixed with a few drops of humility, might perform without supernatural aid : but such a specific for petty, but heart-rending feuds, and for alienations, which deprive life of half its charm, is not to be found in artificial society.

Colonel Ashbrook and Rosabel sedulously measured their conduct to each other by a false pride ; Rosabel had the more excuse for her demeanour, because the decorum of her sex forbade her to sacrifice one iota of delicate feeling, even to her dearest wishes. Colonel Ashbrook meted out his portion of attention to her, exactly by her conduct to him. One kind, though fleeting, glance from her, drew one more kind—more truly enamoured—from him ; but such indulgences were rare.

Thus they went floundering on, mistrusting and idolizing each other, and making themselves as miserable as possible, for no reason whatsoever. Mr. Norman, all the while, buoyed up with false hopes, for he was convinced, whatever Rosabel's feelings were, of Colonel Ashbrook's indifference—being a man, he was


obtuse in these matters: a woman would have been more clear-sighted, and have discerned that under all this veil of indifference—the semblance of avoidance, there was deep and genuine attachment.

## CHAPTER XI.

“Contention, like a horse  
Full of high feeding, madly hath broke loose,  
And bears down all before him.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE gentlemen, after dinner, spent a considerable time over their wine, as was the practice in days of yore, and occupied themselves in discussing the affairs of the nation—a custom which will prevail till the end of time. Their discourse turned upon the recent riots in Edinburgh, excited by the Toleration Act in favour of the Papists. The opinions maintained, even among a class of persons of nearly similar rank, and of education, were various and contending, Lord Lovaine, slumbering tranquilly through the whole, or opening his eyes from time to time, merely to give the nod of assent, usually terminating in a profound doze. When his “very true,” “vastly clever,” “just so,” &c.



had subsided into a complete state of somnambulency, Mr. Norman proposed that the gentlemen should adjourn up stairs; a proposal which was followed by their immediate removal.

The ladies, meanwhile, were but little better employed; at first, they sat round the fire in a formidable circle, Mrs. Waldegrave and Lady Lovaine opposite to each other, behaving with a formal civility, a garb which dislike and malice are wont to assume. Aunt Alice, perched on the edge of her chair, simpering and silly, without being good-natured,—and folly, without good-nature, *is* intolerable; Lady Anna, talking away, with the natural spirits which Rosabel envied her, and yet those spirits were somewhat less agreeable, as Rosabel thought, than usual: Rosabel looking, as Lady Lovaine declared, perfectly stupid—callous, lost to every agreeable or disagreeable impression.

Thus they sat awhile—Mrs. Waldegrave giving Lady Lovaine a long, tedious, minute account of a bilious and nervous attack she had

had some ten years ago ; Lady Lovaine cross-questioning her as to facts and prescriptions, and listening to her, evidently not from sympathy :— Aunt Alice, the while, confiding to Lady Anna the particular defects of a new lady's maid. Rosabel, alone, left out of this confidential communication, withdrew into a remote part of the drawing-room, and took up a newspaper.

She was immediately interested in the narrative of events detailed in it, relative to the burning down of the Catholic Bishop's house, in Leith Wynd, Edinburgh. The account of the destitute families turned out into the streets affected her greatly. How little did she then imagine that she would ever have to witness such scenes ; and that terrors and hardships, heard of from afar, and disarmed by distance of half their terrors to her imagination, would ever come home to her !

The gentlemen were discussing Lord George Gordon, the popular idol of the day, as they entered from the drawing-room :—“ What is he like ? ” cried Lady Anna : “ I have a vast curiosity to see him. I admire, if it be true



though I am afraid, as the common saying is, it is too good to be true, his refusing to take the bribe held out to him."

"—To induce him to give up his seat in Parliament," said Lady Lovaine ;—" I don't believe a word of it."

" I can believe it," observed Colonel Ashbrook.

" Ah!" thought Rosabel—" that is, or was, just like you ; your own noble nature leads you to place confidence in the nobleness of others."

" But he's mad, surely," said Mr. Ashbrook : a man with only seven hundred a year to refuse a pension of a thousand—and only upon condition of holding his tongue."

Lady Anna gave him a reproving look.

" If my Lord George is mad," said Mr. Norman, " it is the love of popularity, vanity, and reckless ambition that have made him so—and that display far more certain symptoms of insanity on his part, than this act of attributed disinterestedness, of which he so much boasts."

" I don't believe in the existence of public virtue," replied Francis, contemptuously.

Lady Lovaine's keen glance was instantly fixed upon him. "I should be surprized, Mr. Ashbrook, if, with *your* knowledge of the world, *your* experience of public men, you did believe in the sincerity of patriotism, or in the integrity of professed well-wishers to the government.—I protest, I quite agree with my Lord George as to the Catholics; and hope that horrid whig and democrat, Lord George Saville, will withdraw this bill they talk of, or we shall all be burned soon enough."

"My lady is a regular firebrand," whispered Mr. Ashbrook to Rosabel.

"As to your brother, Miss Fortescue, who is going to Edinburgh, he will be just in time to be pelted to pieces by the rioters, or set fire to in the castle by the mob. The whole town will be burned—you'll see that."

"I hope not," answered Rosabel, startled by her ladyship's violent mode of representation; and, forgetting herself, she looked round for consolation, as to the person best qualified to administer it, to Colonel Ashbrook.

Colonel Ashbrook came forward immediately.

"Depend upon it, there is no danger," he said, in a hurried, but kind manner. The tumults have, doubtless, by this time subsided. The magistrates of Edinburgh have issued a proclamation, assuring the people that no repeal of the statutes against the Papists shall take place; and whilst the ultimate policy of such a proclamation is questionable—tampering, as it were, with the violent passions of the people—its immediate effects will be to tranquillize the disturbances, be assured of that."

Rosabel looked at him with a pleased and grateful expression.

"I do not wish my brother to escape any opportunity of rendering public service—God knows! I ought not to wish that—but there is something so horrible, so unnatural in the very idea of riots! An infuriated populace—the innocent, it seems by the newspapers, for the most part, the greatest sufferers: the guilty escaping. May we never witness such scenes here!"

"I don't know," said Francis: "Lord George holds our destinies, in my opinion, in

his hands. There are just three parties in the Commons: the Ministry, the Opposition, and my Lord George—and the last by no means the least.”

“ Yet he is not an able, or highly-gifted man,” remarked Lady Anna.

“ No,” said Colonel Ashbrook ; “ but he has what many clever men want, the art of becoming popular. To the suppleness and perseverance of his own countrymen, he unites the apparent frankness and gaiety of the Irish. At nineteen years of age, he supplanted General Fraser, as member for Inverness-shire. That could not have been from his tried talents—it must have been the result of address.”

“ But then, he’s remarkably handsome,” interposed Francis, arranging his ruffles :—“ and that tells immensely at an election.”

“ Handsome ! who considers him handsome ?” cried Lady Lovaine, contemptuously—“ a boyish, feminine sort of beauty at the best—I can’t endure a handsome man !”

Mr. Ashbrook bowed low.

“Your ladyship must surely allow him to have personal advantages—however low they may rank in your eyes; but the fair sex in general, not so gifted and high-minded as my Lady Lovaine, will, I fancy,” looking at Rosabel, “acknowledge the attractions of Lord George’s somewhat over-delicate and womanish countenance. Then he plays upon the bag-pipes and the violin—talks Gaelic, and wears the philabeg among the Highlanders. I see you are quite interested in him, Miss Fortescue. You’re an enthusiast, I’m certain.”

“No, not now; but is he brave with all this?”

“That remains to be proved: at any rate, he’s gallant; and gallantry is one ingredient of chivalry, I presume.”

“Vastly true, vastly pleasant!” exclaimed Mr. Lermont, who had been listening with much enthusiasm to the unfortunate Lord George’s praises. “He’s a fine lad, that, my lord, Lord George; and, if I was a young man, I should adore the very ground he treads on!”

"Gracious me! Wherefore?" exclaimed Lady Anna, "I thought he was worthy of any sentiment than that: an incendiary — a demagogue — one who places himself at the head of popular associations and tumults—an avowed disturber and democrat?"

"Don't condemn him quite so fast, my lady; there's my friend, Miss Rosa, just ready to take his part—ah! she's always the friend of the misguided, if that's any praise—and I know her warm heart will turn to him, when I just mention his bringing off fifteen young ladies, —the flowers of the Highlands, as they called them—in a ship, from Sky to Inverness."

"Bless me! what a cargo," said Francis.

"What quarrelling and gossiping there must have been!" interrupted Lady Lovaine. "—I can't endure young ladies — so insipid and stupid."

"Well, sir!" said Rosabel, seeing that the old gentleman was eager, as old gentlemen are, to proceed with his story—for he was arrived at the age of garrulity—"Well! and what en-

tertainment had he for the young ladies when he had landed them?"

"A vastly pleasant and sumptuous ball; at which these fifteen Miss Mac Leods, all of the same family, danced; and he made love to every one of them!"

"Good patience!" exclaimed Aunt Alice.

"It must, indeed, have required patience," observed Mr. Ashbrook.

"What? Hey? fifteen what," enquired Lord Lovaine, who, having been supported into the drawing room, was just rousing from his second nap—a supplement to the one below stairs.

"Only, my lord," replied Mrs. Waldegrave, primly, "a little history of Mr. Lermont's, which takes the fancy greatly of your relative, Mr. Ashbrook—and of Miss Fortescue."

"—And pray include me among the admirers," said Colonel Ashbrook; "for I admire Lord George's spirit of enterprize greatly."

"If he never does any thing worse than that—" Mr. Norman began.

“ Ah ! I see how it is,” cried Lady Lovaine.  
 “ You young, gay, thoughtless creatures are all in his favour. And, indeed, I highly approve his wishing to put down the papists.”

“—He’s of a most distinguished family,” observed Mrs. Waldegrave, as if, in saying that, she was saying every thing.

“ The more the shame, if he should happen to disgrace it,” remarked Lady Anna :

“ Not all the blood of all the Howards  
 Can e’er ennoble fools or cowards.”

“ But Lord George is neither,” said Colonel Ashbrook. “ He is certainly no coward : he’s too dangerous to be a fool ; but I very much doubt whether he will not prove to be on some subjects deranged : he drives on to such extreme points—he estimates no consequences—the tool of a party, he goes beyond his employers. It is such sparks as these which sometimes set society in a flame.”

“ Then I hope he will remain in England,” said Rosabel, thoughtfully ; “ for he, perhaps, can do less harm here than in Scotland, where his nationality seems to give him influence,”



she looked with enquiring glance at Colonel Ashbrook. Their previous sentiments towards each other seemed extinguished in this common topic of interest, which, at that time, engrossed public and private attention even more than Continental or Trans-Atlantic affairs; for faction, political or private, preoccupies the mind, and prevents it from extending its views to objects of general welfare and interest; and faction was, in those days, rank and virulent as it is in our own times: indeed, personal interests were then even more unscrupulously consulted, and the corruptions of state policy were undoubtedly carried on with far more impunity.

But to return to private details:

"I hope," said Rosabel, after a pause, "my father will not be alarmed about Hubert. Do you think he will, Mr. Norman?"

Colonel Ashbrook, who was standing by her, coloured somewhat, and fell back to give place to Mr. Norman, with no very pleased expression on his countenance.

"Mr. Norman is Miss Fortescue's oracle,"

whispered Mr. Lermont to Colonel Ashbrook, wishing to say something kind of Eustace, as of every one else.

"But I dare say," said Francis, in a low tone, "he speaks in plainer language than the oracles of old."

Colonel Ashbrook moved away, and spoke neither to Rosabel nor to any one else again that evening.

"Mr. Norman has failed to console Miss Fortescue," remarked Lady Lovaine to Lady Anna; "and I am sure if he can't, no one else can—what a disconsolate, woe-begone thing she is grown. I used to like her once; but—"

"But what?" asked Lady Anna.

"—I cannot abide young ladies—that is all — never wish to have any thing to do with them again — most uncertain property — like guinea fowls and turkey poults—can't eat this, can't do that—and just as you're getting fond of them, die off from spite."

Lady Anna looked at Lord Lovaine, who seemed disposed to speak; but it was only to say—

"A vastly fine young lady—I admire her greatly—and so—I did—her mother before her," the last words dying away as he sank again into a dreaming slumber.

"My lord is tired—and we must go, I am sure," said Mrs. Waldegrave, rising; a little disappointed in her heart, that there had not been the wonted poole of quadrille; "and thank you, thank you a thousand times, my lady, for this charming entertainment."

"Such a happy day!" echoed Aunt Alice.

"I am glad to hear some one has enjoyed it," answered Lady Lovaine, in her rude, dry way.

"And then, to see my lord looking so charmingly."

"My lord will do very well, if he will regulate his diet: he is worth twenty of what he was last year," added Lady Lovaine, raising her voice as she saw Mr. Ashbrook near her. "I declare he's a younger man than either of his nephews—the one, worn out with fighting; the other—," she began with a sneer, but stopped.

"—I will not presume to trouble your lady-

ship to fill up my biography," said Mr. Ashbrook.

"By the way, Mr. Ashbrook, you can sing, I think? It has been a mighty stupid evening—perhaps, though we are not fine and fashionable people, you will condescend to give us, in your charming style, some old sonnet, a love melody to suit the younger members of our party—Miss Fortescue or Mr. Norman; or something staid, and severe, and sad, for Colonel Ashbrook, who has outlived his good spirits, and good looks—'Blow, blow, thou winter wind,'—that will do for him," looking reproachfully at her nephew. "Or a chant upon the inconstancy of the male sex, for Miss Alice."

"For men were ever fickle known  
Since summer leaves were leafy."

"Thank you, my Lady; but we are late," said Mrs. Waldegrave.

"A drinking song, for my Lord," cried Lady Lovaine, laying her thin, hard hand upon the poor old gentleman's arm.—"Come, any thing will come well from you, Mr. Ashbrook."

Mr. Ashbrook sang, without accompani-

ment ; and, as Lady Lovaine said, it was the best thing he did. But this very accomplishment had contributed to lead him into society of a caste inferior to his own ; and by making him agreeable, at a small expense of conversational talent, had rather retarded the cultivation of his natural good powers. He had another great qualification too—that of looking handsome when he sang. He chose, in conformity with the fashion of the day, that affected sonnet of Lord Lyttleton's :—

“ When Delia on the plain appears,  
 Awed by a thousand tender fears,  
 I would approach—I cannot move—  
 Tell me, my soul, if this be love ? ”

“ He sings with taste, though his taste in other respects is vitiated,” observed Lady Anna, to Colonel Ashbrook ; “ and with feeling, though he has no feeling.”

“ Do not judge him too harshly.”

“ To hear him sing, one would suppose his inmost sentiments in unison with the purity, the tenderness of the idea ; but, alas ! you know the contrary.”

“ Be not too rigid, Lady Anna ; we are not to judge of men by what they are in extreme youth—few will bear that test—and there are seeds of good in every mind.”

## CHAPTER XII.

"There's nothing in this world can make me joy."


KING JOHN

ROSABEL had written to Mrs. Evelyn shortly after the disclosure took place, which had revealed to her the name of the real author of poor Mary's disgrace. She had written to her at a time when she was comparatively happy; for then, one idea alone possessed her mind. She had heard once from her aunt in reply; and the reply contained a confirmation of the intelligence from Mr. Marshall; in whose blundering, the mistake had first originated at Southwell.

On the morning after Rosabel had dined in Hanover Square, a letter, however, from Mrs. Evelyn arrived. Her Aunt had a legacy left to her; and some forms, necessary to ensure her

receiving it, required her immediate attendance in London. She wrote, therefore, to Rosabel, putting forward the necessity of her travelling to the metropolis, and her hopes that it would not be inconvenient to dear Sir John to receive her for a few weeks. Mr. Marshall had promised to take a bed at the Rectory in her absence ; and a sister of Mr. Evelyn's, not, to be sure, much younger than himself, was to attend to the good old man's wants. Not a soul but herself, as Mrs. Evelyn, in a postscript, added, had for years clear-starched his bands, or curled his wigs. It would be a great change to Mr. E., but she hoped he would be able to get on without her for a week or a time ; this being the first occasion of her leaving home since her visit to Hales, after her sister Fortescue's death.

The journey would require three days to accomplish it ; so that it would not be worth while staying a shorter time than a fortnight, or so. Accordingly, in the course of a few days, Mrs. Evelyn arrived, full of bustle, and surprize, and kindly feelings for every one ;





but shocked to see poor Sir John so altered; and Rosabel too—the fine blooming girl that she was—a complete shadow now : but it was the London air, she supposed.

“ And, as to the London air, Rosa,” said the good old lady, a morning or two after her arrival, “ I don’t know what that may be, not having tried it long enough ; but I have heard a great deal of London smoke, and dirt ; but I must say they far exceed my expectation.”

“ I am sorry for it, aunt.”

“ But, love, how can you help it ?—I am to have my new tabinet before my Lady Lovaine calls ; and think you these ruffles will be clean enough ?—Ah ! here is Sir John—Sir John, I cannot compliment you on your good looks ; and, as to Rosa, I was thinking this morning she is not the same person.”

“ Rosa is not well,” observed Sir John, anxiously ; he said nothing more, but, sitting down, looked intently at his daughter.

There was something in the mode of her father’s scrutiny which Rosabel could not bear.

“ Can he, does he guess what I suffer,” thought

she, "and what I am ashamed of myself for suffering?"

"Mr. Evelyn, Sir John," resumed Mrs. Evelyn, "would be so glad if you would try the Southwell air; the finest in the world, I do believe, for the nerves and spirits"—looking at Rosabel.—"Ah, Rosa! you did not breakfast on a thin slip of dry toast there, as you do here."

"Does she eat no breakfast, indeed?" asked Sir John, in a manner which seemed to attach more importance to the subject than it merited. "I shall insist upon some opinion being taken, if this goes on, Rosa."

"Dearest papa, don't imagine that I am ill," cried Rosabel; "don't vex yourself about that, papa; and, indeed, no advice can do me any good. It is mere want of rest and recreation," she added, recollecting herself; "and, as Aunt Evelyn says, it must be London air—all London—"

"Well, then," answered her father, "we will go to the country, Rosabel. It is my present plan to take up a settled abode in London: meantime, I shall accept for us both your sis-

ter's and Mr. Spooner's invitation. In their house you will have rest and recreation too; for your friends, Lady Anna and Mr. Norman, and our old acquaintance," Sir John added, cautiously, "Colonel Ashbrook, will make up the party."

He glanced at Rosabel, for he alone knew her secret; and for once, in this case, a father's tenderness and anxiety equalled that which a mother might be supposed to feel. Was not Rosabel everything to him—and was not he to Rosabel the dearest bond to life—the object upon which her utmost fondness might be lavished without misgivings or mistrust, without doubt of a return or suspicion of change? Happily for us, we have all some ties of this nature, to compensate for the uncertainties of general opinion, and even of intimate, and, as we might once fondly think, exclusively attached friends.

There was, of course, a gathering of family connections upon the strength of Mrs. Evelyn's arrival among them; and she had to go through a stately series of ceremonious calls, and to

return them, rigged out in her best attire. Mrs. Waldegrave and Aunt Alice bolted from across the way, to pay all due honour to the sister of Lady Fortescue, although they avowedly had not had a great fancy to the connexion ; Lady Fortescue's own family having been unpardonably poor, a fault scarcely extenuated, even by an ancient pedigree. Lady Anna and Lady Lovaine paid their respects, of course ; and Mr. Norman came with the former ; but Colonel Ashbrook did not make his appearance.

" I like Lady Anna vastly," said Mrs. Evelyn to Rosabel, after the first two visits were over ; " but I declare (you will think your aunt grown foolish, Rosa) I like Mr. Norman's company as well as any ; he is so very much of the gentleman, and so mightily kind to us old folks."

" Yes—but—"

" I wish Mr. Evelyn could see him, for he declares there is not a gentleman bred in the present day ; but this Mr. Norman would put these conceits out of joint—he's quite the man of rank, and piously disposed he seems too."

“ He is very good.”

“ And I rather think he has no bad opinion of Miss Rosabel.—Come, Rosa, you and I are old confidants ; your mother, my dear, was so before you, on these matters. I, Rosa, had to do with every bodies’ love affairs but my own. And I have taken it into my wise head, that Mr. Norman has an eye to Rosa.”

“ Well, I am sure I cannot help it, if he has,” answered Rosabel, somewhat peevishly, and turning away as if the subject vexed and irritated her.”

“ And he cannot help it, I dare say, poor man ; but I can’t say you give him much encouragement, Rosa ; but that is all right and proper : and then, as to Lady Anna, they tell me she’s to be matched with that Captain Ashbrook. Not poor Mary’s Mr. Ashbrook. Rosa—you may well look shocked, dear ; that was a sad story — but this is your neighbour, and quite, I am told, a match for Lady Anna. He vastly resembles Dr. Ellis, our surrogate—just the same high, proud look—he will be just the man for Lady Anna.”

"Yes," replied Rosabel, disconsolately, and reflecting upon her own deficiencies. "Lady Anna is so clever—they *will* suit. Was he there to-day, aunt, when you called?"

"My dear, yes; and mighty grave and pompous—and eyed me from head to foot. He is proud, like his likeness; but, no doubt," added the good old lady, qualifying her severity, "he is very superior, and extremely brave, and vastly learned, and all that—and we have no right to find fault with Lady Anna's choice, dear."

"Did he look ill, aunt?"

"Not exactly; but *so* grave: but I left them together, not wishing to be one too many."

"Aunt," said Rosabel, after a pause, "I am not well. I wish you would take me to Southwell with you."

"With all my heart, my dear. I said, you know, you were not well. I will take you with me willingly, if you think it right to leave your papa."

"Papa is going to see Charlotte, and I do not wish to see Charlotte," and a tear or two

fell upon the flowers which Rosabel was embroidering—a piece of work which had lasted her some two years or so; and, according to appearance, was likely to last for two years longer.

“ Please yourself, my love—perhaps you will think that Southwell agrees better with you than Spooner Place. Your uncle will be vastly pleased; and none more so, I do believe. Rosa, than Mr. Marshall.”

“ He is very good,” said Rosabel, humbly.

“ But what shall we do with Mr. Norman all this time ?” asked Mrs. Evelyn.

“ Oh! he is very kind, and has been the best friend in the world to me; but, however, aunty dear, I shall think it a settled thing. Papa is so much better now—and I could not go to Charlotte’s now; there will be so much gaiety—and it is so near Hales, and Medlicote, and Ashbrook, that, that—and I am not fond of gaiety now.”

“ Rosa dear, you are vapourish,” said Mrs. Evelyn, looking at the irresolute, unhappy countenance of her niece with distress. “ It

is these East winds I think ; and I have been used to see it all my life in Mr. Evelyn."

" Ah! his complaint is not like mine," said Rosabel, a smile for a moment playing upon her lips, but dying away immediately, leaving the face in yet deeper gloom. " I envy you and my uncle, aunt ; for you are arrived at the comfortable, settled time of life."

" God bless the child! Why Rosa, love, I never—nay don't take on so, sweet—what is this about?" but Mrs. Evelyn was interrupted in her consolations by the entrance of Lady Anna into the room.

By no effort could Rosabel, for a few moments, be cordial towards her friend. She tried to speak, to look, as usual ; but felt that Lady Anna had unconsciously blighted the happiness of her life. She disengaged her hand, as soon as possible, from that of her friend, and said, in desperation, wishing to cloak the actual state of her mind, of which she was ashamed :

" I wish Mr. Norman was here. Have you



seen him? He promised to come this morning."

Lady Anna's frank countenance was overcast with a momentary gloom. "Eustace is, I know, coming here—and when he does come, you may be certain he will not hurry away," and she walked to the window. "But when, Rosabel, do you set out for the country? We shall soon follow you—I am sure Eustace, for one, will not be happy long after you are gone. You will go direct to Spooner Place?"

"I am not going to Spooner Place," answered Rosabel; "I am going to Southwell, with Aunt Evelyn."

Lady Anna looked surprised. "So then, you leave all the gaieties of the christening to me, Rosabel? Colonel Ashbrook, and all—I thought he was too great a favourite to be deserted in that manner."

"He was a favourite once," said Rosabel.

"And is so no longer? Ah! Rosa. I guess who has supplanted him—we all guess that: but I must go; I will not interrupt your happi-

ness, since I cannot add to it: good bye—good morning!” and hastily wishing Mrs. Evelyn and her friend good morning, Lady Anna hurried away; full of business, or of pretexts of business, and evidently vexed at Rosabel’s cold and constrained manner.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“ — Our doubts are traitors,  
And make us lose the good we oft might win,  
By fearing to attempt.”

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

“ DON’T call to-day—they are all in confusion. Hubert is to take leave previous to setting out for Edinburgh ; Sir John is considerably agitated—Rosabel not very well—and Mr. Norman is there at present.” Such were Lady Anna’s words to Colonel Ashbrook, as they stood together in Lady Lovaine’s drawing-room.

“ Thank you, you have said quite enough—thank you for preventing me ;” was Colonel Ashbrook’s reply. “ I never wish to be in the way ;—do you ? ”

“ Never ! of all things to surprize a pair of happy lovers in a tête-a-tête is most unplea-

sant," returned Lady Anna, looking down ;  
" one can't recover it a whole day."

" No," thought Colonel Ashbrook, " nor should I recover it for many a whole day."

Lady Lovaine entered. " Who can tell me when Hubert Fortescue goes off to Edinburgh ? Here's a packet of commissions for him. I want some of the genuine Scotch oat-cake, it will be so wholesome for my Lord ; and I want some of the true Scotch peppermint, and one or two other little matters. Do you think he may be trusted ? Ashbrook, do take this packet to him, and then you can enforce attention. You will go with it ; will you not ?"

" No, not I ; excuse me, my lady."

" Then you, Lady Anna ; you will be driving about, you may as well drive there. What ! will neither of you oblige me ?"

" For once we are both inexorable ; and pray forgive it this time, it shall never happen again," said Lady Anna.

Lady Lovaine looked puzzled. " There's something very strange about Rosabel For-

tescue—she frightens every one away from her; I don't believe Mr. Norman will come to at last: you will find he is cast off shortly. 'She would, and She would not,'—that is Rosabel's character."

"I do not agree with you," replied Colonel Ashbrook, warmly; "she has too much feeling to be so entirely versatile and capricious."

"And I should think Mr. Norman would not put up with such caprice," remarked Lady Anna.—Lady Lovaine shook her head.

"You neither of you know her. I, once, had a vastly fine opinion of this young damsel; but—"

"Oh, do not let us be unjust!" cried Colonel Ashbrook: "remember her youth, the careless education which has been her portion—her attractions, which entitle her to general and dangerous admiration—and wonder only, that she is generous, artless, warm-hearted, and dutiful, as she is;—I have known Miss Fortescue some years," he added, by way of an excuse, supplementary to this eulogium; but there was a

softness, almost a sentimental melancholy, in his mode of utterance, which excited Lady Lovaine's quick observation.

"Bless me! how pretty and tender!—you have known, then, as great a mad-cap as ever existed. Before your acquaintance with her, Lady Anna, began, Miss Fortescue was as wild and wilful a being—the most untameable."

"This description of character always proves the finest in the end," said Lady Anna: "Who is it that says, 'a girl should set out in life either prodigiously grave and timid, or outrageously giddy and lively?' The medium between these two extreme points—the temperate zone, as it were, in juvenile character, seldom ripens much fruit."

"Then she's so humoured," continued Lady Lovaine; "allowed to go to Southwell, because she fancies it—because, I suppose, in fact, Mr. Norman must follow her there—the hills and dales being so mighty convenient—are they not, Ashbrook?—for tender disclosures;—but, I forgot, you are a confirmed old bachelor."

Colonel Ashbrook had walked away, and had his back turned to his aunt; Lady Lovaine, however, marched up to him, faced about, and, looking up full in his face, cried out:—

“ Lady Anna, come here! look here!—a soldier, and a brave one too, and a tear standing in his eye !”

“ A mere allusion to old times,” said Colonel Ashbrook, dashing it away;—“ I am much concerned for my old friend’s family ; and were I not of opinion that Mr. Norman’s aid would be more gladly received than mine—”

But the entrance of a message and a note interrupted his speech.

Sir John would not consent to Rosabel’s remaining longer than a fortnight at Southwell; for he had become too much accustomed to her society, to bear her absence. Mr. Norman offered to travel with Sir John to Spooner Place, and his offer was accepted. This last arrangement confirmed the appearance which had, for some time, existed, of an understanding that Mr. Norman, who

was permitted to occupy posts which implied great intimacy, was aware of his own footing in the family. Sir John hoped it might be so ; Mrs. Evelyn, somewhat better informed, trusted it would, at some future time, be so : Lady Anna and Colonel Ashbrook were now sure of it: the sentiments which they entertained towards each other were not equally apparent either to Mr. Norman or to Rosabel.

Meantime, Rosabel, conscious of having placed Mr. Norman in possession of her inmost feelings, ran into the error of supposing that he needed no other safeguard against indulging a hopeless attachment to her, than the knowledge of her affections being previously engaged, and that none could, therefore, enter his mind. She reckoned, without any knowledge of human nature to guide her. Hopeless and dispirited herself, she could not imagine how others could build a fabric which she had found to be so visionary ; and she was too much accustomed to Mr. Norman's attentions, to view them in the light in which others, who watched him with



minds less engrossed by *other* objects, undoubtedly construed his feelings.

At times, indeed, she had *misgivings* upon the propriety of her conduct to *him* ; but, then, she had not resolution to drive *him* from her : and his society, which was a solace *to her*, had now become a stay and comfort, upon *which* she was accustomed to rely. Upon one *subject*, he was her only confidant, and yet that *was* now the only subject upon which she did not seek his advice. On all other matters, she looked up to him as to a brother, fondly interested in her welfare. Still, she could never feel for *him* what she had once felt for Captain Ashbrook—it was quite a different thing:—she only trusted that her father's wishes would not again take the direction they had lately done, and that she might be permitted by him and her Aunt Evelyn to be happy or miserable in her own way.

Mr. Norman had seen all that Rosabel felt and suffered upon Captain Ashbrook's unexpected arrival ; and, at first, he was convinced that his sentiments were returned, and

that it would not be long before a disclosure, on both sides, took place ; but, in the course of a short time, his opinion was changed. It was obvious that the fond regrets, the secret longing for reconciliation, were all on Rosabel's side : Colonel Ashbrook avoided, perhaps disliked her ; at any rate, it was evident that he had no wish to revive a certain understanding between himself and Miss Fortescue. Mr. Norman, though a man of quick and delicate feelings, had not the irritability and impetuosity of Colonel Ashbrook ; and he could not help indulging a reasonable hope that when a complete conviction should take place in Rosabel's mind, of Colonel Ashbrook's indifference, she might be gradually induced to listen to his hopes—to the expression of his sincere, disinterested, unvarying attachment.

Affairs were in this position, when, every thing being arranged for Rosabel to leave London with Mrs. Evelyn, the families connected with Sir John Fortescue met, on the evening previous to her departure, at his house. Lady Anna and Mr. Norman came

first—so early, that Sir John had not been aroused from his afternoon's sleep; for he still adhered to his invalid habits. Rosabel was more than usually dejected; she was in that state of spirits in which the heart yearns for sympathy, and longs to expand itself in confession. She was seated between her two friends, her feelings to Lady Anna more than ever affectionate, upon the prospect of their speedy separation, when Lady Lovaine and Colonel Ashbrook entered. In an instant, Rosabel's whole aspect changed; a forced vivacity characterized her manners—a vivacity so well counterfeited, that those who had not witnessed her dejection believed it real. She was making her last struggle to support the semblance of indifference—and it was well performed.

Mr. Norman observed her, with many anxious thoughts. One thing was visible to him: that Rosabel had no hopes of happiness connected with Colonel Ashbrook. That was over—they had met as strangers, and as strangers they parted; and Mr. Norman thought he plainly saw which was the greatest

**sufferer.** He read it in the uneasy and restless, though sparkling eye of Rosabel; in her flushed cheek and tremulous frame. Once, as she took his arm to go into an adjoining room to supper, he, for an instant, touched her hand—it was cold and trembling, yet a fevered flush still burned upon her cheek.

It was the first evening that Sir John, since his illness, had remained in the drawing-room after nine o'clock; a slight collation was set out for the whole party, who, to suit their arrangements to those of the invalid, had dined early. They now drew round the table, and Sir John looked with some complacency on the assembled guests: there were his former neighbours—the kind friends of a more recent acquaintance—his sisters—Rosabel and Hubert, whose departure had been deferred. He was a man who enjoyed his own feelings quietly, and the reflection of his happiness, if one may so speak, gleamed not upon others. The party, being a family party, looked remarkably unhappy. Lady Anna was constrained—Lady Lovaine sleepy; besides, she disapproved

of suppers, and looked reproachfully at Colonel Ashbrook, who upheld them. Mrs. Waldegrave and Aunt Alice were colder and duller than ever: a sort of moral fog seemed to envelope them. When they had expatiated upon all the miseries and evils of London, had convinced Mr. Norman that he was looking ill, and half-frightened Lady Anna into thinking herself so, by assuring her that they never saw such a change, they had nothing more to say. Hubert was humble and depressed; Colonel Ashbrook was serious and distant, feeling himself in the way of persons upon whom he was a restraint; still he was ready to drag people out to converse, if he could:—polite, and seemingly composed, but full of observation all the while. “Something has taken place,” thought he,—“there has been a declaration—else why is Norman so pensive, and so devoted, and why these feigned spirits and this real agitation on the part of Rosabel?”

In the course of the supper, the spirits of the party brightened—general matters began to be discussed. Mrs. Evelyn, calm and happy, only

a little anxious about Rosabel, listened, with ever-ready assent and approving nods, to Colonel Ashbrook's pointed, though seemingly careless, remarks upon such parts of America as he had visited.—“Rosabel, dear, do listen to this, love; you are so fond of the military, you know.”

Rosabel, who was seated next her aunt, looked round. She had not once that evening addressed Colonel Ashbrook—for the first time, their eyes met. His were instantly withdrawn; yet Rosabel thought to herself, “How much that look reminds me of former times!”

“Colonel Ashbrook does not think me a worthy auditor, I am afraid,” she said; resolved, since this was the last time that she should see him for some weeks at least, perhaps at all, that she would keep up the game till the last.

“I was fearful,” replied Colonel Ashbrook, smiling, and with an indifference of manner worthy of coping with hers, that you would not be an interested listener.”

“She is a remarkably good listener,” said Lady Lovaine, who had been, as every one

thought, dozing, but now interposed her observations with her usual sharpness, thrusting her long thin face forwards,—“ my lord has found that out.”

“ I am glad I have any good qualities,” said Rosabel, quickly ; and with difficulty restraining herself from an exhibition of her feelings, which would have been more natural than becoming. She was stung to the heart, and she could scarcely conceal it, by Colonel Ashbrook’s manner. “ He positively hates me now—I do believe it,” thought she.

Mrs. Evelyn silently put a little wine and water near her niece, and, touching Rosabel’s hand, gently pointed to it ; as much as to say, “ you are not well—you want such aids.” And this little trait of kindness finished the business. Rosabel started up from the table, and walked into the next room. Mr. Norman hastily followed her.

“ What is the matter ?” said Sir John—“ is Rosabel ill ?”

No one answered.

“ Had not some one better go and see if

she is better ?" asked Sir John, after a short pause.

No one volunteered services upon the occasion. Lady Lovaine, looking at her nephew, was struck by the unaccountable emotion visible upon his countenance. His eyes were cast down, but he appeared positively to writhe under some mental agony.

A new light broke in upon her, and with true feminine curiosity, she thought she should like to probe Colonel Ashbrook's feelings a little farther.

"Do not move, Mrs Evelyn, they will do very well; Mr. Norman is accustomed to the office of consolation, I dare say. I never saw Miss Fortescue in better spirits; but the prospect of parting from all her friends to-morrow——"

"Is too much for her, I dare say," said good Mrs. Evelyn, feelingly.

"Ah, there she comes !—but what have you done with Mr. Norman, Rosabel—is he ill now?" cried Lady Lovaine.

This was not Rosabel's weak point, and she



answered, with genuine composure, the malicious question ; apologized gracefully for her own ill-timed burst of feeling ; the reason, of course, was supposed to be obvious ; but she was too candid to throw it upon the wrong cause. The company rose to depart, and a round of adieux was to be gone through. Sir John Hubert, Mr. Norman, Lady Anna, and the two aunts, were not to leave for a day or two : therefore Rosabel and Mrs. Evelyn were alone to receive the good wishes which welcome the coming—speed the parting, guest. Mrs. Waldegrave and Miss Alice had ordered their chairs at half-past ten ; and they were pieces of machinery—walking clock-work—and vanished, like Hamlet's ghost, at the appointed hour. Lady Anna and Mr. Norman lingered to the last. Hubert, condemned to see his aunts to their lodgings, ran back first, as he meant to go away at the same time, to give his sister a hasty, but fond, kiss. Rosabel had thrown her arms affectionately round his neck, apart from the company, in the unoccupied drawing-

room, when some one brushed against her. She turned hastily ; it was Colonel Ashbrook, who had been looking for his aunt's carriage : Hubert ran down stairs ; and, for a moment, she stood by Colonel Ashbrook's side, alone.

“ Where are they ?” cried Lady Lovaine, from the inner apartment ; “ where is Rosabel ?—Has she run off with Colonel Ashbrook, this time ?—So, I suppose you have been saying tender things to each other, in the corner—leave-taking,” she added, marching up to them with a candle in her hand.

“ No !” said Colonel Ashbrook, with some degree of sarcasm even in his manner, usually so courteous. “ No such things have passed here within this last quarter of an hour.—Good night, Sir John ; good night, Lady Anna ;” and, shaking hands with Mrs. Evelyn and Mr. Norman, and bowing respectfully, but coldly, to Rosabel, he hurried down stairs, handing Lady Lovaine to her carriage.

Rosabel seemed to be stupefied. The

evening to which she had looked forward, be it confessed, with some degree of hope, was over—all hope was at an end. Thus had terminated the period of her communication with Colonel Ashbrook, after two years of danger to him, and of suffering to her. They had met again only to renew in her mind all that she had once felt, and to shew her that Colonel Ashbrook participated in those sentiments no more. Joy and hope seemed to expire within her, and indifference to all around her to reign in their place. She sank down upon a chair, and scarcely heard Lady Anna's adieux.

“ You are tired, Rosa ; we had better leave you. Come, Eustace, my father will not like to be disturbed by our return. So, you will not go ?—well, I suppose I must leave you then ? ”

Mrs. Evelyn fidgeted into the next room, and occupied herself in thriftily putting out the candles. Sir John went up to bed. Eustace still stood by Rosabel, no less dejected and absent than herself.

“ Rosabel,” he said, after a pause of some

duration, "I do not require again to be told, what you assured me of not half an hour ago, that—that hope for me was out of the question ; and that, if I were to speak or think of love, you wished never to see me again—I do not wish to hear that again ; but——"

"But what?" enquired Rosabel, rather fretfully.—"Why will you vex yourself and me, and bring down animadversion upon our foolish behaviour from ill-natured people, Mr. Norman?"

"Well, Rosabel, I shall do so no more ; only forgive me, for all that I have said and hoped. Be still my friend ; that is all I wish—far more than I can deserve : time may undeceive you—may alter your feelings to one who prizes them not !"

"You think *that*, then?" said Rosabel, with deep emotion.

Eustace was silent for a moment.

"He cannot feel as I do, Rosabel—he could not play such a part if any thing like genuine affection remained to you.—May you rise above

the weakness ; or, rather, may I call it, the constancy of your nature.—Oh ! Rosabel, struggle with it !”

“ I will,” replied Rosabel, firmly ; and, rising, she grasped his hand, and hastened to her chamber.

## CHAPTER XIV.

“ Haply you know not  
The usages of war, and scarce approve  
Proceedings which its hard necessities  
Will oft-times force upon us warriors.”

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE.

“ I WILL struggle with it,” repeated Rosabel to herself, as she descended, on the following morning, to an early, hasty breakfast, having previously bade Sir John adieu in his dressing-room. To Mrs. Evelyn’s surprise, Rosabel’s step was more elastic, and her countenance more animated, than her aunt had seen it since her arrival in London.

“ Upon my word, Rosa, you do not look as if you wanted country air!” was the good lady’s remark, as Rosabel joined her at breakfast.

“ I do hope my father will not disturb himself, to dress and see us go away ; and that Mr. Norman will not trouble himself to come,” said Rosabel. Hubert, with all his good reso-

take care, dearest papa, of the currents of air and open windows—as my Lady Lovaine says—Mr. Norman, do not let him miss me.” She hung round her father’s neck, thinking of a hundred things for his comfort and welfare, which she had forgotten. “Dearest papa, when we meet again, I shall be so well, and it is the very last time I ever will leave you.”

“—And that you should leave me now, Rosa, is to my mind unreasonable. But a fortnight will soon pass away.—Mrs. Evelyn, take my treasure—my good, affectionate Rosabel : I place her under your good care. She has been the kindest nurse, the most dutiful child—but I will say no more.—

“—She has saved my life by her attention, Mr. Norman,” added the partial father, wiping his eyes.

“But a fortnight will soon pass,” said Rosabel, soothingly ; “and Mr. Norman will be with you. Remember your promise to write, Mr. Norman, to me,” she cried, as, tearing herself away, she ran to the street door.

Mr. Norman handed her into the carriage:

his voice trembled, as he said—"I shall remember my promise, Rosabel—think of me sometimes ; and do you remember your promise !"

"Yes," said Rosabel ; "I have already begun to perform it, and I feel quite a different person, since I have made the resolution ; you will live to see me a happy, indifferent old maid."

Eustace shook his head. The carriage drove away.

"Her nature is formed for happiness—why did we not meet sooner ?" thought he ; "or why did we ever meet ?"

Meanwhile, the travellers rolled onwards through the streets to the Great North Road.

Rosabel, who had been boasting to Mrs. Evelyn of her fortitude on parting with Sir John, and professing great good spirits, suddenly became abstracted and pensive.

"I wonder whereabouts we are now ?" said she "I never know one street from another."

Mrs. Evelyn could not assist her.

They turned into George Street, Hanover



Square. Rosabel's attention was now wholly riveted upon the row of houses to the side of the carriage where she sat.

She gave a deep sigh, and sank back into the carriage, as they turned the corner into the square.

Mrs. Evelyn observed—"Does not Lady Lovaine live in this street?" But, receiving no reply, she concluded that Rosabel did not hear her, and she was not a pertinacious questioner.

There is rather too much time for reflection in a long day's journey, to render it the best remedy for a mind diseased. Mrs. Evelyn had the happy faculty of sleeping in a carriage. Rosabel's eyes were wide open the whole day: sometimes gazing upon the whitened hedges of chalky Bedfordshire, sometimes sighing, as she passed, at a distance, a noble avenue, which reminded her of Medlicote; or a comfortable mansion-house, so like Hales; or an irregular, gable-ended, over-chimneyed, ancient edifice, like Ashbrook—all the while flattering herself that her spirits were so much improved. At

the end of the first day's journey, the two ladies slept at an inn. This was quite an undertaking in those days, for ladies, and was considered a sort of service of danger: inns being much less frequented, and, consequently, less respectably maintained, than in the present times. Rosabel herself had a vague fear of fire, murder, thieving, abduction, and apparitions, and carefully peeped into a large closet before she retired to rest; and Mrs. Evelyn took the precaution of looking under the beds and of locking all her boxes. Morning however, found them safe and rested, and with no other inconvenience than some reluctance to turn out at six o'clock in the morning. But Mrs. Evelyn had always adopted that barbarous practice of travelling a stage before breakfast, and could not dispense with it on this occasion. Now, in my opinion, if a lady be afflicted with a husband who has similar propensities, it is quite allowable for her to wish to be single.


At the end of the second day, for in those times travelling was not very expeditious, Mrs.

Evelyn and Rosabel took up their abode for the night at the house of Rosabel's early friend, formerly Miss Phillis Warner, who had now been married about a year, to one Mr. Markham, a banker in a provincial town, through which, by a deviation of ten miles from the main road, Mrs. Evelyn and her niece had agreed to pass. Rosabel had never ceased to remember with good-will, if not with affection, her early friends. Mrs. Markham was the only one of the three married; for Amy, although the belle of the family, had contrived to let several valuable and suitable opportunities pass by; Phillis, was, however, more fortunate than the generality of womankind. She was one of those wives, rarely to be met with, who are completely satisfied with their husbands, their circumstances, and themselves. Conceit, that much-calumniated quality, worked this good work, rather than philosophy: yet, Mrs. Markham's situation, in some respects was not enviable.

——— was a manufacturing town; dirty and over-peopled, yet ancient. The lower

classes had all the squalidness and turbulence of an over-grown, unhealthy population; the better orders retained the pride and contracted ideas of old-established settlers. The streets had the narrowness, and darkness, and inconvenience of antiquity; the suburbs, the planned and squared-out look of modern system.

Mr. Markham was one of the wealthiest men in the borough: yet he lived in a narrow street, or entry to a street, with the word 'Bank,' in large letters, on one end of the house. A vile public-house opposite; a barber's shop, with the well-known pole emerging; and a hat manufactory a little lower down. The house itself was spacious, but gloomy: substantially furnished; that sort of furniture which would last for ages, as Mrs. Markham said, but which never looks well in any age. There was also the advantage of a large garden backwards; over-powered with smoke from some dozen or two of tall chimneys about—when the wind blew westward, as Mrs. Markham admitted; there was an exhalation from the hatting process; from the east, the glass-



house darkened them, as with a cloud; to the north, where they emerged to their country walks, there were brick kilns. Within, however, were genuine goodness, though it was goodness rather of the uninteresting and self-righteous order. It was about four o'clock, on a bright May afternoon, that Mrs. Evelyn and Rosabel arrived at Mr. Markham's residence. Mrs. Markham, who had now the sedate, important appearance of a settled matron, apologized for her husband's absence. He was on duty. A military movement again, in compliance with what was deemed stern necessity, at this time roused the country. Our troops, exhausted by a long, disastrous conflict, not only needed reinforcement in America, the chief scene of warfare, but were now—1780—likely to be called into fresh requisition by the prospect of a war with France and Spain; nor was it even unlikely that at home a standing army might see actual service: disturbances, which have been before alluded to, having recently broken out in Edinburgh and Glasgow, upon the report of the Popery Relief

Bill being extended to Scotland. Under these circumstances, a fine public spirit was manifested; bodies of militia were formed at private expense in the larger commercial towns, and the lesser boroughs followed the example: whilst, to supply even the regular army, officers were taken from the desk and counting-house, and the irregular and derogatory custom of giving what was called occasional rank, began, at this time, to be adopted, to the great dissatisfaction of the regular and veteran officers.

"Mr. Markham is on parade—he will be home soon," said Mrs. Markham; "mean-time, let us chat upon old times. You will be glad to hear, Rosabel, that Henry, at last, means to marry" (there was more than usual satisfaction in saying this) "—a choice we all approve—a Miss Bagshot, of Cheshire, young and pretty, and with a good fortune."

"And Amy?"

"Amy, you know, might marry any day if she pleased; but she is very particular. It is not every one that would do for Amy—she refused Mr. Bacon, of Stillington, on account

of his name ; and Captain James, whom you must have heard of, for he is in the very best society in London, offered to her, but had only one eye."

"Good patience!" ejaculated Mrs. Evelyn, who was taking some refreshment, "that was a blank indeed; yet he is to be pitied, poor man."

"—And one side of his face," said Mrs. Markham, "was really good-looking. Any will outstand her day; she is very much improved, Rosabel, in sense, and information, and all that. Mr. Owen of the iron-works, who is in a very large way indeed, admired her extremely, and he is quite a new light, though somewhat too much in the extreme."

"How tired Mr. Markham will be," resumed Mrs. Markham, after a pause, neither of the ladies being much interested in the subject of her discourse; "and he must work when he comes home too, for two of his clerks are on permanent duty at ———. It is very warm—and there is nothing going on in the town. Mr. Ludlow, our haberdasher, is first

lieutenant—his foreman the second ; so when any one goes into the shop, Mr. Ludlow passes out in regimentals, or his foreman is cleaning up his sword instead of using his scissors.”

“ Just the same thing at Southwell,” observed Mrs. Evelyn :—“ our undertaker’s boy, at Derby, was drummer—the most inconvenient thing in the world.”

“ Then the whole parade was stopped the other morning, because our major, Mr. Simpson the attorney, had fastened his gorget on behind, instead of before ; and they were obliged to come to me to know how it was to be done.”

“ Oh ! the horrors of war !” said Mrs. Evelyn, raising her hands ; “ as Mr. Marshall says, there is no end of them, abroad or at home.”

Captain Markham, as he was for the day entitled to be called, came home in the evening, heated and disheartened, and obliged to sit up half the night to accounts, by reason of the day’s delay. The men, coming, as they did, out of poking factories, or from tailoring work,



could not straiten their knees, or march in step—and the division of awkward squads outnumbered by far the well-organized troop. The serjeant, a regular hand, hired to initiate both officers and men, pursued the old discouraging system ; but his oaths and abuses would not rectify legs long bent in, or turn out toes. The men were zealous, but began to be tired of a warlike life. Then the *feu de joie*, at the last, was altogether a hopeless concern, Mr. Markham said. It ought to have lasted only five minutes, but it went on for half-an-hour ! It was anything but a *feu de joie*.

All the ladies sympathized with Mr. Markham, a worthy, simple-minded man, sincerely intent upon the public good, and not minding what difficulties he went through for the safety of his country. A great deal of patriotic feeling expanded, but bore no fruit, as it were, in these volunteer undertakings. Much military ardour, not being subsequently wanted, evaporated into the desert air ; or blazed, and fell like a sky-rocket down into its native, dense, commercial atmosphere.

On the ensuing day, Mrs. Evelyn and Rosabel moved onwards, leaving Mrs. Markham as entirely satisfied with her destiny as it was possible for a human being to be; as wholly engrossed with the little affairs of the town, as if they had influenced the destiny of Europe. She had her ambition—and it was attained. She was at the head of affairs at ———, looked up to, her opinion quoted, and even, what is more, adopted. Thus passed away her life; bounded to one spot—every wish and idea centered there. The daily routine of her duties filling her whole mind—and thus pass the lives of thousands: happier, perhaps, than the gifted and the aspiring, and those uplifted even to the very pinnacle of fame. At length the travellers reached Southwell. There Rosabel found some changes. Her uncle was evidently more infirm, and much aged. Old George was dead, and had been succeeded in his office by young George. Mr. Marshall was married, and had a child or two. He walked about now with a hen-pecked look, or like a bird whose wings had been clipt.

Mrs. Evelyn in vain strove to like Mrs. Marshall—made, indeed, many excuses for her. “It was a pity Mr. Marshall had chosen a gay young lady, who had been used all her life to the dissipations of Manchester or Birmingham, and could not put up in country quarters—was always longing to go to Derby, or to stay at Buxton, and little assorting with the simple country folk.” Mrs. Marshall had, indeed, caught the prevailing epidemic—she was too fine for her station.

## CHAPTER XV.

“ Oh ! how soon  
 The words and looks which seemed all confidence,  
 To me at least—how soon they are recalled !  
 But let them be—it matters not ; I too  
 Will cast no look behind—Oh ! if I should,  
 My heart would never hold its wretchedness.”

PHILIP VAN ANTEVELDE.

A WEEK of the allotted fortnight had expired. “ Rosabel,” said Mrs. Evelyn to her niece, one morning as they sat together, the old lady spinning, always employed, in the fashion of the old school, the younger one loitering about, unsettled, after the way of modern times ; when Mrs. Evelyn said:—

“ Well, Rosa,—I almost wish you could take to knitting or spinning ; it would give you something to think of.”

“ But I do not want any thing to think of,” answered Rosabel, mournfully ; “ dear aunt, I was just then thinking about you. I see my uncle is very infirm—excuse me,”

aunt ; I fancy he declines daily—I cannot help thinking about you.”

“ My dear Rosa,” replied Mrs. Evelyn, calmly, “ I have for years reckoned upon the probability of being left a penniless widow : my own poor thirty pounds yearly, my little legacy, and some trifle I have saved, being all the earthly goods I am possessed of ; but I have never been anxious over-much. I cannot bear the thoughts of dependance ; no, Rosa, not even on your father—excellent as he is,—he has burthens enough. Now, of all things, I should like to live with you, if you were married, Rosa,—that would be my delight.”

“ But I shall never marry, aunt ; my marrying days are over—quite over, aunt. I shall not justify Mrs. Waldegrave’s prophecies, by marrying beneath me—like great aunt Rosabel : for I shall not marry at all.”

“ What will Mr. Norman say to that ? I do own it, my dear, he is the very help-mate I should pick out for you : of all men, the pattern.”

“ Yes,” said Rosabel, coming nearer to her aunt,—“ if I had never known any one else, I

could have thought so too—if I had never seen somebody. I am getting over it, aunt,” she added, quickly, as Mrs. Evelyn looked at her, surprised—“but I have had, aunt, an ill-fated attachment, and one which has stamped the last two years with misery.”

“I am very sorry for it, love; but it is well you are getting over it. And who, pray, was the gentleman? no one that I ever saw in your company; since it was not Mr. Norman, I am sure it could be no one else.”

“You think not?” said Rosabel; “well, aunt, since it is all now at an end,”—she paused, and sighed heavily—“since now it will never come to any thing—perhaps you will spare me the long story—perhaps, some other time. When I was last at Southwell, I was very unhappy; then I could not reconcile myself to what I had to bear—*that* was real despondency. But now I have learned better things; I see the hand of Providence through all my life. I am sure it is better for me; and our troubles—my own particular disappointments—have brought me to seek comfort from a source

which I never thought of when last I was here."

"Then happen what will, my own Rosa, my dearest child, you will be happy; and, by God's blessing, I hope to see you married yet. I have seen enough of the world, not to despair of that, my good, sweet Rosabel. Then, as to worldly concerns, I can say with David, 'I have been young, I am now old; but I never saw the righteous deserted yet, nor his seed begging their bread.' As for me, love, don't trouble your poor head about me. It is true that I must, perhaps, be indebted to charity, when poor Mr. Evelyn is taken away; but let it be public charity, love, not dependance on private friends. I shall think it no stain, my dear, to accept the bounty of good men; to accept the alms-houses prepared for the widows of clergymen, nor to make solicitation for some other charitable institution for decayed gentlewomen; and shall not expect that dear Rosa will be too proud to visit me."

"Oh, aunt! my dear aunt!—aunt Evelyn!" exclaimed Rosabel, clasping her aunt's neck,

and kissing her with the fondness of a daughter ; —“ while papa lives, you know you have a home ; and when he is taken from us, you must take your Rosa to the alms-houses too : for I never can be dependant upon Philip, nor upon Charlotte ; neither can I ever marry any one but—I mean to say—I can never marry Mr. Norman.”

“ My love, I have not a fear but that God will appoint some place for us both,” replied Mrs. Evelyn, with calmness, though the tears stood in her eyes. “ I have spared no pains to save ;—I have not wasted my husband’s substance :—we have not ground the poor. They talk of the clergy, Rosa, in these unrighteous times, as if they were sharks and Jews ; and it is not known how, in retired places, they not only work humbly and holily, but often forego what the law gives them ; at least, my Mr. Evelyn does : and Mr. Marshall would, I am sure, were he Rector. But, my love, walk out, and recover yourself. Look round upon the fields, Rosa : see how fair and happy every living thing is ; and be sure, love, that God will not desert us.”



It was a fine, but not a sunny day; a sober tint pervaded the groves and fields, to which Mrs. Evelyn, in her simple, pure philosophy, had called Rosabel's attention. How soothing was the fresh air, how cheering the notes of the birds; how grateful the scent of the cowslip and of the hawthorn, as Rosabel took her favourite walk towards Alston Farm: yet, actuated by a sudden impulse, she turned into another path, and soon saw the clipped yew trees of Lonesome, an old manor house, which stood by the way-side on the Derby road. It was the domain of what, I believe, is properly called a yeoman, a farmer of his own lands, and had been in the same family for centuries. Every thing bore the quaint and formal cut of former days. The house, compact and ancient; the very smooth bowling-green before the house, intersected by a short, strait canal; a terrace beyond; a yew hedge, firm as a wall, all round the domain, garnished at each corner with a form of tree something like a dumb waiter. The offices large, straggling, and well stocked. The name Lonesome was well applied to the place; for it

was some miles from any other house, and, except for the internal cheerfulness of its precincts, the old tenement would have appeared forlorn and solitary.

Rosabel looked upon the scene of peace and order almost with envy, and contrasted it with the turmoil and smoke of London ; yet still her interests were centered in the metropolis. She viewed the landscape as she would have done a picture, her feelings were not in unison with the scene ; for,

“ Fixed, unalterable Care,  
 Forgoes not what she feels within,  
 Shews the same sadness every where,  
 And slights the season and the scene.”

A sense of submission to Providence taught her to bear, not to forget ; she felt as one who had no hope, no object in life ; whose mirth must henceforth be forced—even her cheerfulness assumed. She reflected, too, that she had been the means of rendering others as unhappy as herself ; in particular, Mr. Norman was the subject of her regrets.

Lonesome, so still, and seemingly unoccupied,

began to be in commotion, for the cows were returning to be milked, and the team were let loose in the meadow: Rosabel took a last look, and ascended the hill to Southwell.

A gentleman was descending the hill:—Rosabel's thoughts had been chiefly occupied with one object—they had been full of Colonel Ashbrook, though resting occasionally, with concern, upon Mr. Norman. She was just pluming herself upon her returning composure of spirits, when the rare aspect of a stranger, in these retired regions, greeted her eyes. She changed colour and trembled—could it be?—or was her ever-active fancy deceiving her? She stood, leaning on a stile, which intervened between her and the stranger, whoever it might be.

Her heart reproached her for feeling and looking as she did, when, on the gentleman coming hastily towards her, she was apprized of her disappointment. She extended her hand to the unwelcome visitant—it was Mr. Norman. They turned, and walked up the hill. It was not like the meeting of old friends; Rosabel was displeased with Eustace for thus pursuing

her ; he, on the other hand, began to consider himself as tantalized, and treated, perhaps, with unmerited caprice.

“ You have left London some time ? Is my father gone to Spooner Place ? ” asked Rosabel, after a silence of some duration ; “ I expect to hear from him to-morrow.”

“ Sir John is gone to Spooner Place. You are aware that he has taken a new house—in Leicester Fields.—You will not think his health worse when you see him again ; but, I flatter myself, something better, Rosabel.”

They walked on a little ; there were no more questions to be asked, and Rosabel could not proffer that which alone she wished to urge—  
“ Why do you come hither ? ”

They arrived at the garden gate.

“ My carriage is round this way, I think,” said Mr. Norman, his voice trembling as he spoke, and he turned very pale.

“ But why,” cried Rosabel, her naturally kind feelings all returning,—“ why talk of your carriage now ? Surely you will, at least, give my aunt and uncle one day ; you don’t know

Southwell hospitality, if you think it can be otherwise."

"But it is not your aunt and uncle whom I came to see, Rosabel, and of whom I came to take leave—a farewell of some duration." Mr. Norman turned away as he spoke, and put his hand across his eyes.

"You will not suffer more than I shall," said Rosabel, after a pause of some moments; "and yet, I know it must be so—it should, it ought—for your happiness. Oh, Mr. Norman, do not blame me!"

"I do not, Rosabel; indeed I do not; I only pity you. I only wish—and yet I cannot wish it either—but I have sometimes wished we had never met."

He was silent, and they both stood under the shade of Mr. Evelyn's nut trees, which grew over the wall, looking both on the ground, the beauties of the scene before them utterly thrown away upon those who were engrossed by their own unruly passions, and intractable wills and inclinations.

"Well, then," said Rosabel, with a deep

sigh, "I suppose it must be so; I have given your hopes encouragement—I know my aunt Evelyn—I know my father, who is the very essence of honour and sincerity—will blame me much; they will think I have done very wrong in allowing you to go away after all that has passed; but—"

"I shall never blame you, Rosabel," said Eustace; "to me you are acquitted—fully, entirely acquitted: you have never deceived me."

"That is very kind and generous-minded, and it must meet with its reward, Mr. Norman. I feel that I have wronged, misled you; give me but time—I will try to—to—"

"No, Rosabel," said Mr. Norman, firmly; "I will not put your generous heart to the trial; you have had struggles and sacrifices enough to encounter, and you will, I fear, have more."

They were both again silent.

"You think I shall have more?" Rosabel began again, in tremor. "Ah, Mr. Norman, I know to what you allude! Tell me the truth,

and then let me bear it if I can. Are they married ?”

“ Oh, no—no, dear Rosabel,” answered Mr. Norman, kindly ; for in her distress he forgot his own — “ not married—no, not yet.”

“ Not yet ! but let me know the truth. You were ever kind, Mr. Norman ! Eustace ! Now I will call you Eustace, if you will tell me the whole truth ; and see if I cannot bear it !” she added, drawing herself up, and resuming a forced composure.

“ I have heard—but let us sit down, Rosabel, on this bank ; let us sit together once more as we did at Hendon. Do you remember that ?”

“ You won’t tell me—you are evading the question,” returned Rosabel.

“ We must not place too much reliance on what Mr. Ashbrook says,” resumed Mr. Norman ;—“ he tells me that it is to be so ; and there is evidently a great and particular intimacy. I own, Rosabel, I wish, for your sake, it were decided one way or another. To me, except for your happiness, it must now be a

matter of indifference; except, too, for Lady Anna's happiness, which I forgot."

"I am going to Scotland," Mr. Norman, after a pause, resumed in a determined tone. "I shall spend some time in the Highlands. I must try to acquire some of the strength of the Highland character, Rosabel—some of Colonel Ashbrook's happy, happy, indifference."

"You need not so much insist upon that point," replied Rosabel, hastily. "There is no necessity to convince me of that," her face flushing as she spoke, but, in an instant afterwards, turning pale;—"but, the last time we shall meet for years, we will not quarrel," she added, in a soft tone, placing her hand upon Mr. Norman's arm. "We shall meet again as brother and sister—you will marry, Mr. Norman; and when you see me again, I shall be a calm, happy, hopeless,—in one sense, hopeless,—old maid."

"And all your friends married about you, Rosabel?"

"—I suppose in time, Mr. Norman, I shall become reconciled even to that," answered



Rosabel, loftily:—"but were I to say what I now feel, I should in truth say, let me die first!"

"And could you, with those feelings, Rosabel, urge me still to plant all my hopes of happiness upon the remote chance of gaining your affections?—have I not suffered enough? Yet," added Mr. Norman, if I can be a comfort to you—if my friendship is still valued, tell me so, Rosabel—and I will never leave you. I shall see Hubert, and if—if, after seeing him, I thought that—perhaps, by that time, many things may have occurred."

"—Yes; many things may have occurred—you mistrust my fortitude sadly, Mr. Norman. I shall yet shew you that you have estimated it too low."


"—Well then, I have estimated it too low, Rosabel," replied Mr. Norman; too ready to acquiesce in all she said, or all she wished to impress upon others. "It is well, Rosabel, we are not likely ever to have certain visionary hopes realized on my part, for I should spoil you."

"—And now you are going to leave me,"

cried Rosabel, mournfully. "Forgive me, Mr. Norman, many little irritations which you have ill deserved—uncertainty of manner, but never of regard—unkindness, when nothing but affection and respect should have been your portion."

"Forgive you!—Oh, Rosabel, how, with all this, can I leave you? I came determined to take leave of you: how can I leave you, if you thus wind yourself closer and closer round my heart! Mine is no common attachment, Rosabel; you may yet find that."

Rosabel was becoming irresolute; on the one hand, she had, of late, met with nothing but coolness and neglect: she was, at this moment, suffering under the tortures of jealousy. Her pride, her wounded affection, her repeated disappointments, were working her up to a course unworthy of her. "If I thought they were really engaged:"—she, for a moment, reflected—"I am throwing away affection such as I never experienced before. No, even in our happiest days, Colonel Ashbrook's attachment was never like this. How happy would



my father be!—how pleased my aunt!” She turned her face towards Mr. Norman; the open, fair, honest expression of his countenance struck and rebuked her. “*Could* I act thus to him?” thought she—“Deceive him, so good and true; give him the shadow of affections which can never, never be wholly his. No, let me not sink so low as that!”

Mr. Norman read all her irresolution, and the confusion of her mind, in a countenance which he was well accustomed to mark: he looked at her for a reply.

“Well, Rosabel,” he said, after waiting her reply for a considerable time.

“Mr. Norman, I—I——Could I but escape the misery of being pitied!” she again reflected, temptation again nearly getting the better of her sincerity:—“his neglect—his obvious indifference!”—and her face, even in thought, was crimsoned with anger; but she looked again at Mr. Norman; his countenance, so full of heartfelt anxiety—she could not deceive him.—“I will write to you,” she said, rising, and pressing his hand—“do not stay now.”

Mr. Norman looked at her, and shook his head. "All then is over between us, Rosabel?" he said.

"Yes, all is over between us!" answered Rosabel; "but I will write to you: on second thoughts, I think I will not write. Consider all as over now; it cannot be helped," she added, earnestly, "I have done all I could."

"No, it cannot be helped; it cannot now be helped, Rosabel!" returned Mr. Norman, with strong emotion; and he hastened into the carriage before Rosabel, already penitent, already full of self-reproaches, could recall him.

## CHAPTER XVI.

" For not the smile of opening spring,  
 Nor the sun of the summer's day,  
 Nor the sweets on their wings the breezes bring  
 As around the flowers they play ;  
 Nor the teeming earth, nor the beaming sky  
 Hath ever such bliss imprest  
 As the look of a sympathizing eye,  
 The throb of a kindred breast."


MSS. POEM.

LOVE, like certain infectious disorders, assumes a different character, according to the particular temperament of different individuals. Like the measles or the small-pox, it is, in some, so mild and transient a malady, that surrounding observers pronounce it no longer formidable. It may even be as well to have certain fevers once, to prevent the likelihood of their being taken again. True, there is always some degree of delirium in these cases ; but, in many patients, it is merely a pleasant, airy delusion, leading them to set an undue value upon themselves ;—for love is but a species of egotism after all.

In Colonel Ashbrook and Mr. Norman, for instance, the complaint assumed very different

aspects, according to their dissimilar temperaments. Colonel Ashbrook was captious and excited, under its influence ; Mr. Norman, long-suffering, anxious, but patient. The one was proud, the other humble: the obstacles which would have for ever distanced Colonel Ashbrook in the race, attached Mr. Norman but the closer. He was more ignorant of the world ; less under the influence of usages of society, and by no means of a suspicious or hasty temper, like his irascible, but noble-minded rival.

Rosabel had ample time, in the course of a long, wet evening, to dwell with regret upon the many kind actions, the many soothing conferences which had sustained her during the course of her acquaintance with Mr. Norman. His was a gentle and affectionate nature ; his very studies and attainments, had given a tinge of deep sentiment, and of romance to the fine quality of his mind. To him, so peculiar was his nature, Rosabel's indifference, even her variableness of manner were more attaching than the ever regulated, consistent



demeanour, and unchanging regard of his cousin, Lady Anna. And then her early confidence reposed in him, had given to their intimacy the features of friendship—the features merely—the expression, on his part, was love. To all this, compassion had added its usual attaching property ; like that cement which, in a fluid form, insinuates itself into the pores of the broken bowl, but, hardening, becomes in time a portion of the bowl itself.

Mrs. Evelyn and Rosabel were packing up for the next day's journey ; for the fortnight had expired. Rosabel was to join her father at Spooner Place on the morrow, and to proceed with him to London. After that, their future plans were unsettled : perhaps they might be condemned to pass another summer broiling in London—perhaps they might travel—to Wales, or Scotland. Rosabel, once of so castle-building a nature, had never cared to consider the future.

She thought it, however, her duty to apprise her aunt of Mr. Norman's fugitive visit to Southwell, and left her to draw the inference.

Mrs. Evelyn looked serious, which was unusual with her—and sighed—which was more unusual. The subject had even the power to distract her from the fine-drawing of some rents in Rosabel's best ruffles ; and she looked up, from time to time in the subsequent course of her packing, to see how her niece really felt on the occasion.

“ Poor man !—poor Mr. Norman !—a remarkable well-behaved young man :—how far before that cold, unbending, stiff, Colonel Ashbrook—there's your apron, Rosa——”

“ He's not stiff—he's not cold—he's not proud, aunt !—if you knew him,” replied Rosabel ; her face glowing, as she tumbled out a large box-full of top-knots and buffonts, in a condition by no means over-orderly.

“—How came you to know him so well ?” said Mrs. Evelyn, archly ; “ for I never knew you to speak to each other neither.—I should have said—no offence, Rosa—you had a remarkable dislike to each other—I hope he's not the man !” she added, taking off her spec-



tacles, and, looking without them at Rosabel, full in the face.

“ Not now, aunt—not now—but spare me, whatever you may think—hearing him abused—I cannot bear that !”

“ He, who is to be married to Lady Anna, Rosabel !—Surely, surely, times are come to a pass since I was a girl—your very particular friend !”

“ ’Tis all over now, aunt !” cried Rosabel, weeping. “ Say no more about it : depend on it, your own Rosabel will never do any thing to disgrace herself, aunt—never, never !” And they parted for the night.

Mrs. Evelyn and Rosabel had become dearer to each other than ever, since they had lived together ; and the aunt now loved the niece the more, that sorrows, which were to herself unknown, had chastened Rosabel thus secretly, but severely. But Rosabel possessed more fortitude than even Mrs. Evelyn believed her capable of exerting. From her aunt she had imbibed lessons of patience, of daily practi-

cability ; that submissive spirit which smooths every difficulty, and humbly resigns itself to inevitable evil. There was nothing in the Parsonage of Southwell to banish cheerfulness, but everything to nurture religious hope :—that “perfect love which casteth out fear” appeared in all Mr. Evelyn’s devotional exercises ; he had passed a long life, if not, in his own estimation, meritoriously, at least to his own knowledge innocently ; and by no mystical reasoning was he led to fear his acceptance with his Saviour. In purity of heart, in guilelessness of conduct, as he was one of those little children of whom the kingdom of Heaven is composed.

Rosabel, as she heard, for the last time, on the night before her departure, the voice of her uncle at evening prayer, felt assured that he would, ere long, be among the congregation of the blessed. *His* pilgrimage was near a close ; and, at that moment, she envied him—she reflected that he had no torturing, self-doubting retrospection to add to the sting of disappointment in the dearest hopes that the human heart

can frame to itself : and she indeed envied him. Mr. Marshall read the chapter before prayers : for, of late, he had often stepped in to assist at these religious duties, which were simple, yet regular : short, but no less impressive. He was startled at Miss Fortescue's suppressed, but fervent grief, as she supplicated in the words of our inimitable evening collect—for, “that peace which the world cannot give.” Perhaps, in poverty, and with an uncongenial help-mate, the good man could but too well sympathize with her feelings. But he had been, on a former occasion, struck by the deep, unwarrantable distress of the young lady upon the occasion of poor Mary's funeral ; and, whilst he admired her sensibility, he rightly judged that some other cause than mere sympathy might be connected with that heart-felt grief.


“I have often wished,” said the worthy curate, as he stopped, after Mr. Evelyn's retiring for the night, to take, according to custom before he was shackled by matrimony, a cup

of elder wine, hot in itself—hotter from nutmeg and cinnamon—fit only for Derbyshire stomachs——

“—I have often wished for some opportunity, Miss Fortescue, of repairing an injustice which we all of us fell into, respecting Captain, or now, as Mrs. Evelyn tells me, Colonel Ashbrook——

“—I was not aware,” he continued, “of there being another gentleman of the same name. We know so little of great people in these parts: and, from his seeming to act as master of Cavendish, I concluded that he was the owner of that pretty property. Then as to poor Mary, she had an insuperable objection to mention him, which I encouraged; for I could not but wish, Miss Fortescue, the sin only to be remembered—the sinner forgotten.”

He paused—Mrs. Evelyn filling up the interim with—“This puts me in mind of old times, Mr. Marshall—but where are the mufatees I knit you?—Mrs. Marshall should not let you go out of nights without them.”



“ Upon enquiry, resumed Mr. Marshall, “ I find this Colonel Ashbrook to be a fine, noble, gentlemanly fellow as can be ; and that he assisted poor Mary merely because the other would not : which bounty led, unhappily, to a vast deal of scandal.”

“—You know Colonel Ashbrook, I presume, Miss Fortescue ?”


“ Yes ; I used to know him very well, indeed,” replied Rosabel.

“ It is a comfort to reflect, that my humble assertion could in no ways affect a man of his rank and influence ; yet I have never injured any man in word or deed, without a desire to atone for my error by word or deed. If I should, by any mischance, I may call it, for I am not partial to London, be called up to the great Babel, on business, will you aid me in procuring an introduction to Colonel Ashbrook ?”

“ I am sure my father will do so with pleasure,” said Rosabel ; “ I am not likely, myself, to see Colonel Ashbrook.”

Mr. Marshall departed, and Mrs. Evelyn and Rosabel quickly retired to rest.

On the ensuing day, Rosabel departed. Long did the image of Mr. Evelyn, emerging from his dressing-room, in a pepper-and-salt dressing-gown and velvet cap, and laying his hands on her head, solemnly blessing her, saying, "May the God of all Mercies protect you;"—long did the recollection of Mrs. Evelyn, running up to the garden gate, to see her quite off,—to catch the last sound, as it were, of the carriage wheels—her eyes red with weeping, but a kind smile playing upon her lips;—long did the grey walls of the old Parsonage, its boundary of ash trees, its garden, now gay with every old-fashioned variety of flower,—even its cow-houses and its out-houses, where the tithes, freely and unobtrusively offered, bleated and lowed their allegiance to their new master;—long did the village, poor but peaceful, apart from manufactures, and from all the horrors of congregated misery:—long, very long, did all these simple associations rest upon Rosabel's memory, like a pleasant dream, the details of which were fast fleeting, notwithstanding her wish to retain them.



She turned to take a last look at the church-yard: there was Mary's grave overgrown with sweet-brier—the only memento, the only distinguishing mark which Mr. Evelyn, for example's sake, had permitted—her father was now laid beside her; his stout frame, which had stood a long course of hard toil and exposure to the cutting winds of his native county, had declined under the withering sense of his daughter's disgrace; and it required but a slight accidental disease to destroy him, after her death; for the frame, enfeebled by sorrow, cannot, with safety, be reduced by means necessary to over-master disease; and, if once reduced, is not easily brought up again—but he was now at rest.

## CHAPTER XVII.

"——— I have suffered much.  
 Kind Heaven but grant tranquillity ! I seek  
 No further boon."

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE.

SOUTHWELL was scarcely a day's journey from Hales Hall, and Spooner Place about eighteen miles farther on; Hales was not exactly in the road, but not so far out of the way, but that Rosabel could gratify a desire she had of seeing the haunts of her infancy before she proceeded further on her journey.

She left the carriage at the little inn of the village, desiring her maid to wait for her there, and walked up alone to the house. Every sight and sound now brought back former days to her memory. The very noise with which the gate leading into the park fell back into the latch, brought back a train of associations, which are often awakened by the merest



trifles. There, as she passed, was the thorn, under which she and Hubert had often played together ; left all day long, as children, to amuse themselves, picking up beech-mast or haws, or making butter-cup chains, gathering health and mental vigour all the while : for nothing conduces so much to both, as freedom, with safety, in childhood. The very branch, whereon he had often perched her—a secure, though uncomfortable seat, coveted merely for its being attained with difficulty—still grew out in the same elbow-chair-like form. The wood-anemony and the wood-sorrel were flowering, just as they used to do, in the plantation which bounded the park ; some old horses, pensioners, galloped about with nearly as much alacrity as they had done years before, when Hubert and Rosabel had often been chid for driving them, only their tails and manes were a little longer, and more disordered. A clear, gurgling little stream flowed, as of yore, over stones which Hubert and Rosabel had troubled themselves to plunge into it to make cascades ; but the stones were now overgrown with moss.

The house had been so long shut up and unoccupied, except by two old servants, man and wife, that Rosabel was surprized to see the little study window-shutter open. Perhaps her father had been there from Spooner Place—he might be at the Hall now—she hastened on, her face glowing with expectation, and ran eagerly to the hall door.

The Hall, however, was silent ; the sun shone in upon its untrodden pavement—not the sound of a voice or footstep broke upon the desolation of a mansion, once full of merry voices, now entirely still. Rosabel, waiting for the door to be opened, looked in at the side window. A hat and gloves lay upon the marble slab ; some one, at that very moment, crossed the hall, took up the hat and gloves, and vanished at a side door. Rosabel could not mistake the person—it was Colonel Ashbrook ; if she had been there a minute sooner, she should have met him. Yet why should she meet him ? Of what avail could it be to renew impressions of mortification and disappointment ? Perhaps not only to renew, but, what was worse, to betray these emotions.

With slow pace, the old housekeeper, at length, opened the hall-door: her astonishment, on seeing Rosabel, consumed a few minutes more. As soon as she could, with decency, rush into the house, Rosabel, in defiance of every previous conclusion, ran across the hall, and through the very door where she had seen Colonel Ashbrook vanish. It opened into a long passage, leading into the breakfast parlour, where Rosabel had often sat with Mr. Lermont. That worthy abettor in her misfortunes was now at Teignmouth, attending on the last days of a consumptive niece: for the first time in his life, lying upon his oars, and convinced that he could neither do good nor harm. Rosabel now passed impatiently into his sanctum; the door, which opened upon a bye-path towards Ashbrook, was a-jar—some one had just gone that way: a note had dropped out of the pocket of the intruder—Rosabel picked it up. The direction was in Lady Anna Norman's hand-writing, and to "Colonel Ashbrook."

"What a pity!" said the house-keeper, who

had followed Rosabel ; “ he was here this minute. Give it to me, Miss Rosabel ; I think I can overtake him : look, Miss, he is scarcely out of sight.”

“ No,” said Rosabel, half-choaked with emotion ; “ I can enclose it to Colonel Ashbrook, and you can send it to him ; you need not call him back.”

The housekeeper went for writing materials. Rosabel sat where she had left her, reading over and over again the direction: she looked at the seal—“ *Je ne change qu'en mourant.*”

“ May they be happy !” said Rosabel to herself ; and she buried her face in her hands. The housekeeper set down pen and ink beside her ; Rosabel enclosed the letter. “ It would be but polite to write some line of compliments, at any rate ; but then Lady Anna, as well as Colonel Ashbrook, would be sure to know that she was aware of the relation which they bore to each other ; and could she trust herself, upon meeting Lady Anna, to carry off the matter so that her real feelings should escape detection ? She distrusted herself—she hoped to

escape the misery of congratulation : surely she might be permitted obviously to know nothing about the affair until all was concluded ; until knowing her misfortune to be inevitable, she must, perforce, learn to submit to it : she supposed the time would come when she would know how to do so."—So, after some consideration, Rosabel resolved to do what, though not most gracious, was, under her circumstances, the most delicate, and, for once, the most prudent—she entrusted Mrs. Miller, the house-keeper, with the direction of the fatal packet, to the good lady's great astonishment ; and sealed the note, that her own " Rosabel" might not betray her, with a watch-key, merely inspecting the spelling, and preventing its being forwarded to " Kernel" Ashbrook ; though, after all, there was a sad scoring, the Colonel, black as ink could make it, and Ashbrook, looking like Ushbrook. When all the business was completed, Rosabel enquired, on what account Colonel Ashbrook had been to Hales Hall that day.

" Only to speak about a dog that had been

lost, a setter, Presto I think he called him, and said he would rather have lost two than that one; but the keeper knows nothing about him!"

"Oh, Presto! how well I remember him!" said Rosabel; "Howard's favourite!—dear little Howard, I shall see him soon, Mrs. Miller. And so—you let the Colonel out this way, did you?"

"Why, he asked me; and he has been into the library, and about the Hall, looking about him this half hour. And look you here, Miss Rosa; you remember this, don't you?" and Mrs. Miller, leading her into the passage, pointed to a series of marks, made, in the careless manner of the inseparable pair, upon the door-post:—

"Hubert—so high, March 10, 1776."

"Rosabel—her mark, March 10, 1776."

"That is my writing, by its crookedness, I am sure," said Rosabel.

"Well; the Colonel looked at this ever so long, Miss Rosa, and said, it was the very first year he ever saw you, and that you were tall of your age, wanting but half an inch, says he

of your elder brother. That was just before you came in, and I never see a man more taken up with such a trifle: I should not have noticed it, but he asked me first what it was."

Rosabel moved away: something in all this struck her as very strange. "I hope," thought she to herself, "that no lingering regrets, nor foolish misgivings, in which I am concerned, will prevent Colonel Ashbrook and Lady Anna from being as happy together as they both fully deserve. Oh, may *she* never feel doubt! that misery of sensitive minds! May she know herself to be exclusively beloved! not ever experience, alas! changed looks; coldness, where once there was warmth; indifference, where once there was the most ardent, and, according to language, the most enduring attachment!

"I have gone through much," thought she, as bidding Mrs. Miller farewell, she walked back again towards the village—"I have gone through much, but may God, in his mercy, prevent me from having to suffer *that* again. Suspicion—uncertainty—which alter one's very nature: something like envy—jealousy, I sup-

pose, that degrading passion, which no one excuses, and no one pities, but which is, of all the afflictions of life, most hard to bear—in suffering which, we are ashamed to look for sympathy—we dare not ask for consolation—may I never, never experience it again! May I learn to see her once happy, as I *was* happy, and yet love her and prize her just the same! Alas! well would people say that friendship is but a name, if all my feelings were exposed!”

She walked down to the gate, but she looked not again at the thorn—she pondered not upon the purling streamlet:—she turned from the aspect of every thing which could bring back to her mind the days of infancy or of childhood.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

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“ My heart  
 Still finds its fondness kindle, if he smile—  
 The memory of our love will ne’er depart.”

PERCIVAL.

“ How tired you look !—I am quite sorry to see it :” was good-natured Mrs. Spooner’s ejaculation on meeting Rosabel in the Hall, on her arrival at Spooner Place in the evening.

“ Bless me ! how thin you are grown !” was young Mrs. Spooner’s salutation to her sister.

“ Rosabel, take a glass of wine,” said Mr. Spooner, kindly.

“ I am very well, thank you—where is my father ?”

“ Sir John, most unfortunately,” said Mr. Spooner, “ was obliged to set off for London this very morning, on particular business.—He is gone to your new house in Leicester Fields.”

“—We have had nothing but disappointments, Rosa,” interrupted Charlotte; “only think of Lady Anna Norman not being able to come.”

“—Nor Mr. Norman at present,” said Mr. Spooner—“he is gone to Scotland.”

“—So our party for the Christening is sadly cut up,” continued Charlotte. “Baby has been baptized; therefore I shall put it off; especially as Lady Anna Norman cannot stand God-mother in person.”

“But Rosabel could be her ladyship’s proxy,” interposed Mr. Spooner—“We have not thought of that.”

“—Colonel Ashbrook is here,” added Mrs. Spooner; “so you would not be without a supporter, Miss Fortescue.”

“No, I would rather wait for Lady Anna; and besides, if report be true, she will be our neighbour before long—so it is given out by his own family—and I am sure I should be very glad, for one.”

“So should I,” said Mr. Spooner.

“Any thing to cut out Francis Ashbrook,”

said old Mrs. Spooner ; “and Lady Anna, I am told, is quite a pattern—but, I rather think. Augustus, Colonel Ashbrook, does not like to be joked about it ; therefore, pray say nothing—it is better not. He looked quite offended when you joked about marriage—men, come to the Colonel’s time of life, don’t like it. Now, Miss Rosabel, can I shew you up stairs,” said the kind-hearted old lady —“you look fatigued—and have had no dinner, I day say—come, come, you are not yourself, indeed, and let me prescribe for you, as Lady Lovaine says.”

“ I am so disappointed,” observed Rosabel. as they went up stairs—“first, that papa is gone away—then, that my little sisters and Howard are not here ; but it would be inconvenient to Charlotte, I suppose.”

“ Why, you see, she thinks it better for them, little dears, to be at school ; and it is awkward mixing children, and her nurse objects to it ; but never mind. I have my phaeton here, and you and I will go over to see Howard at any rate—he is only sixteen miles off, and we

will get Colonel Ashbrook to drive us ; he is so obliging. Come now—what is the matter with you ? Why you're quite an altered person ?”

“ Pray excuse me, dear Mrs. Spooner—pray forgive me ; but I feel so down-hearted, as the Derbyshire people say—I am so foolish—” replied Rosabel, trying to smile, but bursting into tears.

Mrs. Spooner vanished in a minute for hartshorn, smelling salts, æther, and assafœtida drops—old-fashioned people always have things at hand. Mrs. Spooner was one of those ladies who can lay their hands on every thing in their own dressing rooms, even in the dark—the blessed effect of order.

But when she returned, Rosabel had roused herself from a depression which she knew to be unworthy of her. “ I was so disappointed not to see papa,” she said—“ but it is over now—it was the not seeing him, that upset me.” And she spoke the truth ; for when the spirits are wounded by supposed or real unkindness, or change, it is on our home affections that we

rely for comfort. In fact, when all is right *there*—the world cannot vex us long. “If poor little Howard had been here—or I could have had Caroline, or sweet little Annette with me—” said Rosabel, “I should not have been so foolish. But it is a disappointment not to see papa: and you know, Mrs. Spooner, I’m a sort of spoiled child.”

“Very true, my dear; but make haste and dress, and you’ll come down quite yourself, I know, bye and bye.”

Rosabel followed her advice; and, after resting awhile and dressing—that operation being often a great restorer of the spirits—she went down to tea.

As she entered the room, she heard good-natured Mrs. Spooner saying:

“—And the poor thing was so disappointed not to meet her sisters; and has set her heart upon seeing little Howard to-morrow—so it’s very kind in you, Colonel.”

“Miss Rosabel,” cried the good lady, turning towards her, “here is a piece of good news for

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you. Colonel Ashbrook says he will undoubtedly drive you over to see your brother to-morrow, or any day that you please."

It was not now for Rosabel to act with a feigned distance towards Colonel Ashbrook, affianced, as she firmly believed him, to her intimate friend—especially, all appearance of pique was to be avoided; she now felt, that if ever self-command and resolution were essential, it was in a case like the present—she, therefore, thanked Colonel Ashbrook, with a friendliness of manner which startled him; and, for the first time since their alienation, she extended her hand to him. Her composure, and her kindliness of manner, by some fatality, only confirmed Colonel Ashbrook's previous impressions. "She is not afraid now," thought he, "of rousing unfounded hopes, or challenging presumptuous attentions, perhaps; but, why think about the matter at all? She considers every thing now as completely out of the question. After our last interview, can I doubt it?"

Colonel Ashbrook had just arrived from

Ashbrook, and gave several particulars of his visit, and of the state in which he had found the neighbourhood. Rosabel was curious to hear whether he would refer to his visit to Hales Hall, or not—whether he would touch upon the loss of his dog: an occurrence which would seem by no means unimportant in the view of the company assembled; but on both points he was totally silent, while he descanted upon the change which a few years' absence had made in families—some were grown so much taller; others looked so ill; others were so much happier, and looked so much younger than formerly; others had been swept off from the place by altered circumstances, some by death, some by marriage.

“And did you,” enquired Rosabel, timidly, “see any thing of poor old Martha? I longed to call upon her to-day, when I was at Hales, but it was too far—I was afraid of being late.”

“Were you at Hales to-day?” said Colonel Ashbrook, quite surprised, and, indeed, confused.

“Yes; but for a very short time,” and

Rosabel paused, and looked at him for a reply to her first question.

“ Oh! yes; Martha—she is remarkably infirm this winter—she still speaks of you Miss Fortescue, I assure you, with affection and gratitude. Lady Anna Norman, when she and her father did me the honour to make a passing visit at Ashbrook lately, looked in at Martha’s cottage—was quite delighted to talk to her of you.”

“ I must try,” thought Rosabel, “ to get accustomed to all this; yet the well-meant, and decided, and, as she fancied, almost condescending kindness of manner, was even worse, more trying than his former coldness, and evident pique and constraint. She was relieved, when the circle into which the tea-party had formed itself was broken up by Mrs. Spooner’s poole of quadrille; to form which, Colonel Ashbrook was put into requisition, and she was enabled, upon the plea of fatigue, to retire to her own room.

Rosabel wrote by the next day’s post to her father, to tell him that she should join him in



London in a very few days. She felt that it was impossible for her to continue where she was, without detriment to her health—which was now not strong—and without, what she dreaded more, perhaps, betraying her own dejection, or at least her variableness of spirits to those around her. The more she now saw of Colonel Ashbrook in easy society, the more certain she became that no one could ever succeed him in her affections—that once having been attached to him, she could never feel even interested in any one else. Enlarged and refined as were her own mental powers, she was now more competent than formerly to estimate properly, not to over-rate, Colonel Ashbrook's intellectual superiority. She no longer judged of men exactly by their attainments; for opportunity and circumstances regulate these: had she taken these solely into consideration, Mr. Norman would have far excelled Colonel Ashbrook in her estimation. But there is an originality, and the stamp of strong good sense—that foundation of all the higher qualities of mind—which interest far more than profound

erudition, and which ought in fact, to be more highly regarded than mere stores of knowledge, which may be heaped up without possessing these qualities. Colonel Ashbrook, brave and high-minded as he was, displayed, as an intimate companion, the gentlest qualities possible; a constant wish to please—a constant desire to avoid giving offence, characterized his deportment. He might be proud, as the world—and the world is generally right—considered him; but it was a pride never felt by the humble—never extended to the unpretending.

Good Mrs. Spooner, finding that she could not persuade poor dear Miss Fortescue to stay a little longer amongst them, contrived the little excursion to see Howard the day after Rosabel arrived at her sister's; observing, "it were best to strike while the iron was hot, for Colonel Ashbrook might change his mind. Besides, I fancy," whispered she, "he may be going up to London—Lady Anna Norman is there, you know; and my son thinks it is to be a match—what do you say to it? I have a friend at Hartwell—half way to Mordan, where

I want to call and where you can lunch—and you and the Colonel, being both of you very romantic, can go about and look at the old convent there. Shall we call on Mrs. Downes as we go, or as we come back?”

Rosabel thought, for her own part, it were best to call as they came back: Colonel Ashbrook, on being appealed to, like all his sex, was more cautious. “It would be better to wait and to see how the weather continued, and at what time they were likely to be at home, before their plans were arranged.”

Mrs. Spooner’s phaeton was not the small, neat, convenient carriage of modern days, in which you may enjoy conversation and a view of the country at the same time. It was a cumbrous machine, with a seat behind, which could be put up at pleasure, and which was now appropriated to the two ladies. The front had a towering head to it, under which the Colonel and his servant sat; consequently, Rosabel had as little chance of being vexed, or gratified by his society, as if he had been in a different carriage—indeed, perhaps, less opportunity of any

conversation with him. And she had little desire; for now his good nature, his condescension, and compassion — as she termed it — vexed her as much as his coolness and distance had formerly done.

At the end of the first seven miles they stopped, but merely to refresh Mrs. Spooner's fat steed, who led as easy and happy a life as she did herself; and then they drove on to Mordan: the Colonel and Mrs. Spooner adjourning to the inn for an hour, whilst Rosabel visited the clergymen of the place, under whose tuition Howard had been placed.

Her little brother scarcely remembered her: at first, he turned shyly from her, and hung his head; but the sound of her voice, and her manner, after a time, revived reminiscences of home, and of Rosabel.

“ Well, Howard! look at me—It *is* Rosabel. Come, dearest Howard, you are to return with me — the gentleman who drove us is kind enough to say that you will not crowd us—so make haste.

— “ And then I can talk to you about Hales

Hall and Drayfield—you remember Drayfield, surely?—and Mr. Rivers and Peter, and the cows and sheep.”

Mr. Rivers and Peter, the cows and the sheep, were remembered even somewhat better than Rosabel herself. The memories of children are very uncertain—sometimes very disappointing; they always seem to remember what they ought not to do; and to harbour the recollections of vulgarity and peculiarity with far more tenacity than one would desire.

Howard and his sister rejoined Mrs. Spooner at the inn. Colonel Ashbrook was strolling about the town, looking at the church; but he re-entered the long, low, dark, tasteless room of the country inn, very soon after Rosabel's return.

“Ah! Howard—no longer little Howard. Do you remember me?” was of course the first question.

Howard looked at his face, dubious.

“Then you remember Ponto and Presto, do you not?”

“Oh, yes; I remember *them*—I remember


now, Rosa, how you and I always used to see two dogs and a gentleman—Ponto, I think, one dog was named ; but I don't remember the gentleman's name."

" And it is no matter, now," said Rosabel, hastily ; not wishing to touch upon certain recollections—" as the horses are ready, Howard."

" No ; it is no matter," thought Colonel Ashbrook, with some bitterness. " There are such things as convenient and inconvenient memories."

It was three o'clock in the afternoon, when the party reached Hartwell.

Mrs. Spooner was intent upon taking all her companions to lunch at Mrs. Downes's ; but Rosabel was firm in *her* refusal. She had a biscuit at Mordan, and would prefer walking about. Colonel Ashbrook had been set down, previous to this discussion, as he had an old college friend at the parsonage, upon whom he said he wished to call : that is to say, he resolved to move as much out of Rosabel's way



as possible, to aid her wishes, without annoying her with his presence.

“There,” said good-natured Mrs. Spooner, “somewhere about here is the old convent: not worth seeing, I believe—but perhaps you may like to look at it, Miss Fortescue?—it is down that way.”

Rosabel thanked her—saying, what she really felt—“that Mrs. Spooner was always contriving to think of others;” and, taking the direction which was pointed out, she walked down, with Howard’s hand in hers, to look at the convent.

Hartwell was a small, scattered village, with scarcely a house or two above mediocrity, to raise it in the estimation of a traveller above a collection of cottages. Mr. Downes’s residence was, indeed, seen staring out in all the glory of red brick, at some distance. The place had always been poor; and, perhaps, as a village, owed its very existence to the proximity of the nunnery; one of the few original conventual establishments spared by Henry the Eighth,

upon the pretext of good discipline ; but probably, in reality, from the interest of some favourite, or some other motive of policy or expediency. The convent house, however, had fallen into such a state of dilapidation, that, about the period of James the First, it had been found necessary to purchase an abode, not very far from the original situation, in preference to repairing the old tenement. The nunnery of Hartwell was, therefore, of the architecture of that period, with no pretensions to stateliness, nor even to magnitude ; but of that peculiar and picturesque character with which our ancestors invested even their lowliest dwelling-houses. It stood a little way apart from the village, in the centre of a garden, hacked by an orchard, and stoutly barricadoed all round with a good high stone wall, universal in monastic establishments. The situation had been judiciously chosen, the soil around light and fertile, and the convent at a convenient distance from the county town. A running stream, not far off, settling into a pool, supplied a fish-pond



or two, convenient for fast days, and never dispensed with in monastic enclosures.

Rosabel, thoughtful, and almost sad, sauntered with Howard to the principal entrance of the convent, and was at first contented with looking from the road into the outer courtyard, well secured from intruders, to all appearance, by an iron gate. The court was turfed, and looked so cool and quiet, that Rosabel longed to cross it, and to peep through a half-opened door, which she saw at its extremity, into the garden. A huge old-fashioned, dusty, one horse vehicle, of a coal-scuttle form, which probably had brought to the recluses the priest, their confessor, was the only track of visitants—the only mark of communication between the nunnery and the outer world. Rosabel was looking about for a bell; thinking, like her countrymen in general, that money will do every thing; and wishing much to see the inside of the convent, when Howard discovered that the gate was merely latched, not locked, and succeeded in pushing it open.

They walked into the court ; it was perfectly quiet—not a sound of bird or beast broke upon the ear. Yet it was enclosed, to the right, by lofty barns and stables ; to the left was a shrubbery ; in one corner, at the end of this shrubbery, was the small, secluded burial place of the nuns. Rosabel, catching a glimpse of an humble shrine or chapel, walked up to the sacred enclosure, appropriated, since the Reformation, for the reception of those who deemed a Protestant Church an unworthy receptacle for their remains. The cemetery was indeed humble—a number of grass-grown graves, marked only by a cross of wood or stone, at the head of each, bearing the initials of the sister entombed beneath—forgotten, perhaps, by friends and relatives—formed its mournful and simple features. A candle or two, burning within the little shrine, seemed typical of that holy flame of faith which, once lighted, burns to immortality. A chaplet was hung here and there, upon the crucifixes of the more recent graves. In a foreign land, these indications of superstitious zeal might

catch the eye without exciting the fancy : but in the midst of a calmer and less picturesque faith, the persevering and peculiar tribute thus offered is elevated in its character by the pertinacity with which it comes forward, when all around is adverse.


Rosabel looked on with strange sensations : but Howard drew her away towards the inner gate. This also was unlocked, and the brother and sister were proceeding, quickly, on to the very door of the convent itself, when the fierce growl of a dog, posted at this inner gate, checked their speed. Howard, who, as Rosabel once said, had some high blood in his veins, was a fearless little fellow ; and though the animal was of that terrific breed, the bull dog, he felt less alarm than his sister.

“ Don’t you see, Rosa, he’s chained ?—come on, come on, he cannot reach us here ! ”

They ran past, nevertheless, in haste ; Rosabel in fear and trembling. The dog growled, barked, howled ; he could not reach them ; he grinned with spite ; shewed his horrible teeth, and seemed to rave with fruitless desire of

blood. The true spirit of exclusion and persecution appeared to have transmigrated into the soul of this savage animal. Rosabel and Howard, however, ran quickly to the door of the convent. It was underneath a porch, gay—alas! how contrastingly—with the damask rose, and perfumed with the clematis. Rosabel, full of expectation, and eager to view the interior, rang the door bell. She had every hope of being admitted; and, with regard to Howard, his tender age would plead for his entrance with his sister.

They waited at the door some time. Some novices or boarders, children taken into the convent for the purposes of education, were at play in a highly-walled garden in the front of the convent: their young and happy voices breaking upon the stillness around: but these notes of happiness, of a sudden, at some appointed signal, were hushed. The growl of the savage dog growing fainter and fainter, was, for some time, the only sound. At length, that ceased: just then, a volume of sweet



sounds burst from the nunnery—a strain full, rich, clear, devotional—the voices of the nuns in unison with the solemn notes of the organ. It broke upon the repose around, as if piety and melody were the only sentiment pervading that still scene—a tribute, perhaps sincere, from hearts, perchance breaking in their unnatural bondage, or broken, in years gone by, by the troubles of a busier condition. Rosabel was melted almost to tears; even Howard stood still, and looked up in his sister's face, mute and awe-struck.

The swell of the organ died away; the chaunting melted, as it were, into stillness. The door, at length, was opened by a lay-sister. The convent could not be seen that day—"It was prayer-day—Father Louis was there—a new sister had been admitted—there was no chance of any stranger being allowed to enter."

To urge the request would have been indecent: besides, Rosabel began to fear that her friends might be waiting for her. She had

only one petition to make—"would the lay-sister tell her if the dog were safe?"

"Safe! no—he would tear you to pieces could he get at you," was the discouraging reply, from a visage sour as hard duty and solitude usually render visages.

"But he is chained," said Rosabel; "can he break his chain?"

"No—but he can slip his collar." This was uttered with a look which seemed to say—"why did you come in?—you have no business here."

Rosabel looked at Howard, and turned very pale. "Could they go out by the garden?"

"Oh, no—no one was ever permitted to go in there, except the gardener; and he, never, when the nuns were taking their exercise—they might go out as they came." And as this reply was given, the door was flung to—the lay-sister disappeared.

"Never mind, Rosa," said Howard; "you know she says he only sometimes slips his collar; he may not do it to day.—Come along, I will take care of you!"

Rosabel pressed the little hand which she held, and looked fondly at him. "It is a shame for me to be afraid, when you are so brave, Howard.—Well, let us creep round, he will not see us, perhaps."

"No, Rosa," said Howard, "go boldly forward; that is the best: he will think us beggars, if we creep."

"That is good advice," said Rosabel: and the pair, hand in hand, moved steadily along.

The savage beast was in his kennel; at first, he did not hear their footsteps; but, just as they drew quite near to the gate, he roused, and yelled; he ran to the utmost limit of his chain—shook it, yelled, grinned, and slipped his collar.

They had just passed him; Rosabel trembling—not so much for herself, as for him, whom a dying mother had bequeathed to her family. She turned to look, at that moment, then fled—the bull-dog in full pursuit—his teeth clenched—a malignant grin suspending the louder indications of his rage. Rosabel pushed Howard first—"Run, run, run,

Howard!" she cried—"run, my boy!" she screamed again. She gave herself up for lost—the horrors of laceration seized hold of her—she felt, as it were, held back and spell-bound: when, suddenly, the dog became mute, still; she hardly dared to believe her senses—scarcely ventured to look round. At length, breathless, she gave one glance!—the lay-sister, seized by some qualms of remorse, had come out to her assistance, on hearing the well-known bark—she was holding him down, fastening on his collar. The dog, quiet as a lamb, his rage silenced, his malice appeased by the well-known voice, was couching, rebuked by her familiar authority.

Rosabel leaned against the iron outer-gate, panting for breath, her eyes fixed upon Howard, who was pale too, but not so pale as she was.

"I am so faint, Howard—I mean, I am sick, love—so faint——"

"Rosa's faint—she's ill!"—cried Howard, darting into the middle of the road, as his eye





caught a fresh object—"Arn't you Colonel Ashbrook?—do go to Rosa."

Colonel Ashbrook was sauntering about, looking at the convent too.

"Rosabel!" he said, quite surprized, whilst running to her. He supported her for an instant: then, placing her arm within his, led her gently to a little grassy bank on the garden side of the court, and made her sit down. A dizziness came over her—the outhouses, grass-plot, every thing seemed to turn round with her—her head fell upon his shoulder.

"Howard, my boy," said the Colonel, pointing to the convent, "see if you can get a little water—run there!"

The sounds of his voice aroused Rosabel; she started up.

"No; not *there*!—I am better now, thank you, Colonel Ashbrook." She looked at him for a moment: his eyes were fixed upon her face with a fondness—however, it is no use to expatiate upon these scenes; those who have been in love can, I suppose, imagine them; those who have not, will not and can-

not, and they had better not seek to analyze feelings which, however delightful in themselves, are seldom enjoyed without some alloy of disappointment, or remembered without some pang of regret.

Colonel Ashbrook's words had roused Rosabel—his looks seemed to complete the cure. She rose, in a few minutes took his arm; explained, a little languidly, indeed, but, with Howard's assistance, the alarm which they had encountered; and met Mrs. Spooner's rumbling vehicle upon the road—got in behind, the Colonel in the front; and were as completely separated from each other, until they reached Spooner Place, as any ascetic or recluse of the convent which they had left behind could have desired.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“ Ah! why  
 Do you still keep apart, and walk alone,  
 And let such strong emotions stamp your brow,  
 As not betraying their full import, yet  
 Disclose too much !”

MARINO FALIERO.

ROSABEL was in her own room, dressing for dinner, when a gentle tap announced Mrs. Spooner, senior.

“ Well, how are you now ?--better, I hope ? I have a most agreeable piece of news for you ; but first, say how you like my new neck ?--*gorge de pigeon*--India muslin, as you see ; and my ruffles ?--a present from my dear boy,” added the happy old lady ; happy because ever culling the sweets from the thorny paths of life ; like Samson, extracting the honey from the worthless carcase.

“ Mr. Francis Ashbrook is arrived--the most merry, handsome, gay young beau in London, I hear--Come, Miss Rosa, do smile upon him :

he has the second chance to Medlicote ; and, as Lady Anna is to have Colonel Ashbrook, do you take up with Mr. Francis."

"That is not very likely," said Rosabel, with some bitterness.

"Why not ? He has been a little wild, to be sure ; but a reformed rake makes the best husband ; every one knows *that*. Come now, you are ready, and he is in the drawing-room—so amusing ; and I want to ask him all about the Colonel and Lady Anna. I fancy he is in the secret."

"It is no secret now, I rather think," replied Rosabel, calmly, as they descended to the drawing-room.

Mr. Francis Ashbrook was standing there in a careless, or seemingly careless, conversation with Mr. Spooner ; the rest of the party, including Colonel Ashbrook, were still at their toilets.

Mr. Ashbrook and Mr. Spooner were discussing, according to the custom of the world, their acquaintance and friends : the one inoffensively, and with a sort of indiscriminate

lather of general commendation ; the other, bitingly, sarcastically, casting insinuations to the right and to the left ; touching upon no virtues without a sneer, remarking on no vices without an inuendo, that the failing were even worse than it seemed, the shade of guilt darker than the world deemed it ; thus tinging every thing with the hues of his own perverted mind.

Mr. Warburton was the theme when Rosabel entered. Mr. Ashbrook's hopes in that quarter were blighted : the old gentleman had just married his maid-servant.

"Of course," said Francis, a dash of off-hand gaiety softening the sting of his remarks,—“of course, one had no chance against a lady who could send up a good dinner every day ; made old Warburton completely happy at four o'clock ; *preserved* him in good-humour. I never properly lamented poor, dear, excellent, tiresome Mrs. Warburton before ; you, Miss Fortescue, grieved for her loss, but your sorrow has not the poignancy of mine.”

“I am sorry that her place has been so supplied,” said Rosabel.

“ After all, it is no great matter—she was nothing better than a house-keeper, her successor a cook—’tis only one gradation. I protest I think her successor the more valuable member of the community—but I was doomed to be cut out. I shall be heir-presumptive all my life: you should pity me, Miss Fortescue.”

“ Then it is quite true about Lady Anna ?” asked old Mrs. Spooner :—“ What a delightful, suitable connection !” She turned to Rosabel as she spoke.

Mr. Ashbrook marked the varying colour, the suppressed sigh, of Miss Fortescue. Mischievous was his element—mischievous, began in early life in wantonness, preserved in later years, when the bad passions were confirmed, for selfish, not to say malignant purposes.—

“ — Lady Anna is so superior: is she not, Miss Fortescue ? I think there will not be in Christendom so exalted a couple as her Ladyship and my valiant cousin. The happier he—the more unhappy I !”

“ Then you assume it to be true ? ” said Mr Spooner.

“ I do ; because, being the most unhappy man in existence, it completes my destiny. I must forthwith hunt out for an heiress :—have you a creature of that kind in the neighbourhood ? or must I advertise ? ”

“ Well, I declare,” said old Mrs. Spooner. “ it will make the neighbourhood quite gay.”

“ Do not commit me to Colonel Ashbrook : you know, like most old bachelors, he is very tenacious of being joked. And as to Lady Anna, I thought she would have flown at me the other day, when I hinted at the thing—though I am sure every one must see how much it is my interest to contradict the report. To be met, as I was, with condolence, down half St. James’s Street, Miss Fortescue, the other morning.—

“—But here he comes ; let us change the subject.—Hem!—what were we saying ?—Oh ! Miss Fortescue prefers novels to plays—very serious and proper.”

"I hate a tragedy," cried old Mrs. Spooner, taking up, laughingly, the theme of this new theme ;—"and, on the same principle, I cannot bear a novel that ends ill."

"Why, it is abominable," said Mr. Ashbrook, "after making one toil through some four, or five, or seven volumes, to leave one miserable at the last."

"As a well-judging friend of mine observes, said Colonel Ashbrook, "it little matters what one endures through the whole four volumes, if one has but a little comfort at the last."

"I always look at the end first," said Mr. Spooner.

"Novels never amuse me," remarked Charlotte, who just entered:—"the heroines, for instance, are always such paragons of perfection—so unnatural!"

"Oh, a plain heroine would be dreadful," said her husband.

"I should close the book at once," said Colonel Ashbrook.

"The least one can do for a heroine," added his cousin, "is to make her handsome. Set



her out well—give her a good start, as I say of my horses. To go through the world of love and romance ill-favoured, is to contend with the tide—to combat the very elements.”

“ Mrs. Spooner is non-suited,” said Colonel Ashbrook, smilingly.

“ But then,” it is so absurd that all novels must turn upon love—a thing of so little moment in real life.”

Colonel Ashbrook looked out of the window: his cousin, after glancing an instant at him, said:—

“ I am again so unfortunate as to differ from Mrs. Spooner. I confess, I should think a novel without love, something like infantile cookery, as my scientific foe Mrs. Warburton would say: soup without spice; maccaroni without cheese; or any other comparison equally elegant—I shall be more eloquent in metaphor presently, when actually at dinner.”

“ I should not like a novel without love,” said Colonel Ashbrook. “ It is bad enough for one’s life to be without it—for the routine of existence to go on, unenlivened by hope, de-

pressed by the littleness of daily realities :—I own, I like the delusions of a novel, if they are delusions.”

“—But here is dinner, which I hope will not prove a delusion,” said old Mrs. Spooner, as she went down stairs with Rosabel—the ladies going first, like a flock of sheep ; the gentlemen following—“ I am so pleased, Miss Rosa, with that sentiment of Colonel Ashbrook’s : such a hero, and yet so warm-hearted ; he is quite the man for domestic life ; I hope, when my Lady Anna is in the country, we shall see you at Spooner Place a little oftener ; you’ll be often at Ashbrook, I fancy. Have you the head-ache, dear ?”

The good lady sat by Colonel Ashbrook all dinner-time ; and, finding him of so amiable a turn, talked to him of the subject which, from his own acknowledgment, he liked best—the happiness of domestic life — her son and daughter in particular ; “ how much attached to each other they were !”

“ How grave Ashbrook looks,” said Francis to Rosabel, next to whom he sat. “ I have

often observed that to be the case when persons are on the eve of matrimony."

Rosabel was grave too. She could not imagine why, if such were Colonel Ashbrook's prospects, he should still regard her, as he evidently did, with an awakened interest. Perhaps, the return to old scenes, and a revival of old impressions, had renewed feelings which she thought had for ever expired in his bosom. She shrunk back in horror, from the notion that a latent affection was contending in his mind with an engagement formed, as she had every reason to believe, with her best friend. She came, after revolving everything in her mind, to one conclusion—the resort of those who find that they cannot effectually struggle with their own wills—she resolved immediately to leave Spooner Place; never to return to Shropshire—she hoped that she might never see him again; thus acknowledging to herself that absence was her only resource—her last alternative in the endeavour to recover peace of mind.

The children were brought in after dinner.

Mr. and Mrs. Spooner could now boast of two scions, a boy and a girl; light-haired and light-eyed like their mother, and with a touch of their father's plainness and insignificance. The inclinations of the various gentlemen were evinced in their sentiments respecting children: all agreed that they were fond of children; but each had his own mode of liking and prizing these blossoms of our existence. Colonel Ashbrook did not fancy them until they came to a certain age, till they were rational and conversable—he looked at Howard as he spoke. Mr. Spooner, who had many excellent feminine qualities, liked them at all ages; from doll-hood up to childhood. Mr. Ashbrook was really fond of them too; some remains of original goodness of heart still clinging to the worst characters; causing one to regret that the good seed had been early and irretrievably choked up.

“To see Mr. Ashbrook caressing and playing with these young innocents,” thought Rosabel, “who would imagine that he had the dupli-

city! the heartlessness!"—and the tears came into her eyes as she remembered poor Mary.

"What is her name?" enquired Colonel Ashbrook, inspired with sudden curiosity, as he followed the direction of Rosabel's eyes, and saw them riveted tearfully upon the baby.

"Anna," was old Mrs. Spooner's ready reply, with a surprised look, "and whatever else you please."

"Oh, yes! I forgot—and who is her Godmother to be?"

"Have you forgotten?" cried Mrs. Spooner; "Lady Anna, to be sure!"

"Bless me, how strange!"

"How strange," echoed young Mrs. Spooner, "that the Colonel should forget what baby's name was to be."

Colonel Ashbrook strove to justify himself, but in vain, from the charge of obliviousness and indifference, and rushed into another snare. "I really expected, though perhaps I dreamed it, that Miss Fortescue was to have been the Godmother, and the baby's name—Rosabel."

He spoke with some hesitation, but an immediate torrent of objections was poured forth in answer to his suggestions.

"It is such an old-fashioned name," said Mrs. Spooner, junior; "it reminds me of my grandmother, and a score of old aunts. Mr. Spooner does not like it;" for, like most wives who take their own way, Charlotte had recourse to her husband's name to enforce her own inclinations, when convenient. There is nothing like a husband by way of an apology for one's own wishes and follies. None of the Spooner family could endure the name of Rosabel. Old Mrs. Spooner cautiously owned she even preferred her own, 'Hester:' it was agreed that Rosabel was not a name to harmonize with any other name; Rosabel Anna, or Anna Rosabel, would sound like one name: the important subject engrossed papa and mamma half-an-hour; they were driven quite aback by Colonel Ashbrook's suggestion—attaching, as they always did, much importance to what he said and wished.

Rosabel Anna would not do. "What do

you think," said Mr. Ashbrook, "since surnames are the fashion, of naming Miss Spooner, Rosabel Norman? I declare, I think Rosabel harmonizes vastly well with Norman; do not you, Miss Fortescue? That would obviate all objections. Hail! Rosabel Norman, that shall be," he said, with a meaning glance, addressing the unconscious infant.

The combination called forth an interchange of silent looks from all the party, except Rosabel and Colonel Ashbrook, who manifestly avoided encountering each other's gaze. Mr. Ashbrook's seemingly careless hint succeeded to a certain extent.

Rosabel, with the pretext of preparing for her journey of the ensuing day, retired to her own room two hours before the party had thought of separating. Her mind was troubled upon many subjects, which even tranquil reflection could not disperse. Mr. Ashbrook's inuendoes had recalled the painful recollection of Mr. Norman, and her late interview with him in Derbyshire. She gave some moments of anxious reflection to his ill-requited affec-

tion : how painful was the reflection that henceforward she must be for ever deprived of his kind offices as a friend, his sympathy in sorrow, and the enjoyment which she had derived from his conversation in happier days. She had only one comfort, in reflecting that she had, from the first, warned him of her previous attachment—that she had never knowingly deceived him. She dwelt upon the remembrance of his excellent qualities almost with tenderness ; the loss of his friendship added to the desolation of her prospects in life. She began to exaggerate his virtues to herself, to think that there was no one so excellent, so kind, so true. She resolved to write to him, as a sister, as a friend, when once she should arrive in London.

'Then her thoughts rested upon her father : an aching, longing desire to see him again took possession of her heart. Henceforth he was her *all*.—Mr. Norman alienated from her, Hubert away, Charlotte indifferent to her, Colonel Ashbrook married—it was well, indeed, she had a father, and such a father.

She dwelt upon his goodness, his affection,



his nobleness of character, with a feeling of exalted delight; she was proud of being his child—proud that such a man could love as he did! Where was there a daughter so blessed! Surely that consideration ought to console her under every distress.

“ May God restore us to each other in health and safety!” she said to herself, as she drew from a place of careful deposit a miniature of her father, which he had given her before they had parted. It was her father in the prime of life, not Sir John Fortescue when broken down by disasters, and stricken by repeated calamities;—it was her father before her mother’s death, that first calamity, which had been succeeded by nothing but woe to him, and to some afflicted members of his family. The brow was unwrinkled, expressive of serenity as of mental power; not bent, as now, with long corroding anxieties. The eye, so mild and contemplative, sparkled with health; and, whilst it was reflective and pensive, had not the melancholy, the unsettled anxiety, of her father’s present glance. The lip was tinged, and

rounded with health ; the cheeks filled out ; the hair, though powdered, still evidently retained in the picture its native dark-brown colour.

Rosabel marked all these variations of time, in her own mind ; and her spirits, renovated by the thought of being reunited to her father sank again within her.

“—Yet they said he was looking better, even well, and Charlotte has no fears of his recovery—yet why, why these misgivings ? Is it because all my happiness is for ever centered in him ? Charlotte has other ties—children, husband, a kind mother-in-law—her earthly happiness is not all centered in this dear parent. But I—oh, my father!—but I shall soon see him again!” she added, as, shutting up the miniature, she threw herself on her knees, to offer the heart-felt prayer of an innocent and devout, although an erring, heart.

She could not sleep for expectation ; she longed to set out, to bid adieu to Colonel Ashbrook, and every recollection of him, and to centre her affections where they would be returned. In the autumn she trusted that new

scenes and a change of acquaintance might aid her in recovering the buoyancy of spirits which had utterly left her. She had ceased not only to be diverted with trifles, as was her wont, but to be aroused by those stores of intellectual interest, which even the every-day events of life present. The impulse to improvement, which had, some time back, carried her on to make rapid advances in knowledge, and which the enthusiasm natural to her had caught up, now languished, and was nearly extinct. Life was without an object to her ; society had lost its zest—improvement its value.

She felt, justly, that she was degrading herself by indulging in these morbid feelings ; for a woman does degrade herself, who has ceased to combat with a hopeless attachment. To a certain extent, we may pity—then we begin to condemn, what we finish by despising. Sterne, who knew the sex well, never gave better advice than in these two words:—"Reverence thyself." A woman who ceases to do that, ceases to merit compassion.

Whilst Rosabel thus ruminated, her altered

appearance was thus commented upon in the drawing-room :—

“ I am quite vexed,” said old Mrs. Spooner, between deals, “ to see—clubs trump again, I see—Miss Fortescue looking so poorly—spadille, if you please.”

“ Yes,” replied Mrs. Spooner, junior—“ Rosa is—My love,” to her husband, who was her partner, “ how many do we mark this time ? ”

Colonel Ashbrook was looking at her with great anxiety.

“ Poor Rosabel,” said Mr. Spooner ; “ I hope she is not hurt at our not chusing to name our baby Rosabel ;” apologetically—“ all the Rosabels in the family having been old maids. Basto, Colonel Ashbrook.”

“ Miss Fortescue is ill, I am sure,” said Colonel Ashbrook, anxiously ;—“ were she *my* sister, Mrs. Spooner, I confess I should be alarmed about her.”

“ Colonel Ashbrook, we wait your lead,” cried old Mrs. Spooner ; “ I cannot compli-

ment you as a partner to-night ; in every thing else so delightful."

" I ought to behave well to one always so lenient as yourself, dear Madam," answered the Colonel, courteously ; — " I must plead guilty," he added, really anxious to be released. " Francis, you are a much better player than I am." He looked up earnestly at his cousin, as much as to say, " Do relieve me ! "

Mr. Ashbrook, who was looking on with a shrewd, half-merry face, dived into Colonel Ashbrook's present feelings, and did not accede with his accustomed willingness.

" Your sister never plays at cards ; I was looking about for her, Mrs. Spooner, to challenge her to a game at chess," said Francis.

" Oh," said Charlotte, carelessly, " I don't know where she is gone—Augustus, do deal for me, dear—in her own room, I suppose. Rosa's spirits were always so uncertain."

" Poor thing!—Spadille, manille, ponto, basto, all in one hand!" cried old Mrs. Spooner.

" Hearts are not trumps, Edmund," observed

Mr. Ashbrook, slyly; upon my honour, I pity Mrs. Spooner."

"I should be happy if you would cut in, Francis; I have the head-ache: I am afraid I am indifferent company, in every sense, to-night."

"You would prefer chess, perhaps?" inquired Mr. Spooner; "Where is Rosabel?"

"Oh, do not seek Miss Fortescue on my account," replied Colonel Ashbrook, rising, and giving up his seat to Francis.—"Really I shall be much obliged to you, Francis, to succeed me at my post."

"Most willingly, most happy," said Mr. Ashbrook, "at any time. Talking of posts, what a fuss they are making now about these new military appointments, as if interest had not always ruled the army, the navy, and every thing else."

"Dear me! yes;" said Mrs. Spooner, junior, without a muscle of her face moving; "such nonsense—but it is all the Whigs."

"Colonel Ashbrook, what do you think of the state of the standing army?" asked young

Mr. Spooner, in an interval between poole and poole.

Colonel Ashbrook was standing by the window, looking out upon the pale moonlight, which danced upon a sheet of water near the house, and his hand upon his forehead; but upon the question being repeated, he came forward towards the table.

"I think so seriously of the evils of patronage in respect to military appointments—I consider the discontents upon the subject to be so well grounded—being myself one of the malcontents——"

"Bless me!" exclaimed old Mrs. Spooner; "I thought there were no gentlemen among those who took that side of the question. So, you've pam, Charlotte."

"The Colonel's so very sensible, so very superior," whispered the good-natured Mr. Spooner to Mr. Ashbrook.

"So are most men of fortune and consideration," thought Mr. Ashbrook to himself; "so shall I be when I am, if I ever am, owner of Medlicote."

"Then the practice of giving occasional rank," resumed Colonel Ashbrook, dejectedly, "at the option of any influential man; bringing from behind the counter, or from the desk, men quite unacquainted with military duties, and placing them over experienced soldiers, sometimes even over veteran officers. All this has lowered the military character in this country, and has disgusted those who are enthusiasts in the profession. We feel ourselves degraded by such associations."

"Very true; then you are rather tired of the service yourself, Colonel?"

"My dear, will you mark?"

Colonel Ashbrook was silent.

"I hope not; don't put that into his head," whispered Mr. Ashbrook, archly, across the table.

"I hope, then, we shall not lose you again?" asked old Mrs. Spooner, good-naturedly, her eyes fixed upon her cards.

"The regiment is at present in England, and likely to be for some months, at any rate," was Colonel Ashbrook's reply; "but he as-



sured, Francis, however afflicting the intelligence, that, if any such appointments as those I have been speaking of should be made, I shall resign ; though probably only to seek a command in some other," he added ; " for what is life without an object, a pursuit ? "

" Very true ! " was old Mrs. Spooner's calm reply.

" You should marry," said Mr. Spooner.

" La ! you who have such a large property ! " said Mrs. Spooner.

Colonel Ashbrook, escaping from these observations, strolled about the lawn in the front of the house, looking up at a long range of windows, to see if he could, perchance, guess where was the apartment to which Rosabel had retreated so early that night.

## CHAPTER XX.

"Go to, I need not counsel ; I'm resolved."

PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE.

FULL of heroic resolutions, Rosabel went down to breakfast on the following morning. Howard was the only individual there before her ; but, in a few moments, old Mrs. Spooner entered hurriedly : she was quite in a state of perturbation. Colonel Ashbrook had set off most unexpectedly that morning, summoned upon regimental business of the greatest haste ; he had been called up by an express at four o'clock that morning, and had merely left a note to say he was gone, having ridden to the nearest market town, where he was to take a chaise and four.

"So! this is the end of our christening, Miss Rosabel! There's quite a fate against it,

I am sure; I never knew a christening deferred to any good."

"Charlotte is quite upset about it," said Mr. Spooner, who came in, leading in his disconcerted wife.

"We put off going to Holham Races on purpose," said Charlotte, in a grumbling tone.

Rosabel was astounded. "So, then, he is gone! and it is now, indeed, probable that we never meet again. Oh, may a good Providence watch over him and preserve him!" The tears came into her eyes, and all the tenderness of her early love for Captain Ashbrook kindled within her bosom. Forgetting Lady Anna, her father, every thing, for a moment, she felt and feared only for him.

What secret service could it be? The newspaper was referred to, but the newspaper was three days old. On the Continent, indeed, no new operations had been, as yet, made known in England. The Channel Fleet was at Spithead, its movements suspended for want of a commander: Gibraltar was still in blockade, in which position it had continued for nearly a

year: all British hearts throbbing alternately with admiration for the unparelled skill and resolution of General Elliot, its defender, and with gratitude for the well-managed and effectual aid of Sir George Rodney, in administering supplies to the garrison. But, whilst all Europe was engaged in a confederacy for the subversion of British power, saving the Queen of Portugal, there could be no reason to wonder that any secret or sudden expedition should be formed, in which it was probable that the services of tried and approved commanders should be sought.

After a few more conjectures, a few more expressions of wonder, breakfast was begun and concluded; old Mrs. Spooner saying every minute, "Well, I thought we should have had Colonel Ashbrook with us a little longer. Miss Fortescue, if he's gone to London, perhaps you will see him there."

"Oh! he's not gone to London. I shall not see him," said Rosabel, shaking her head, dejectedly.

"He's on the road to Portsmouth by this time, I have no doubt," said Mr. Spooner.

"Perhaps, after all," exclaimed Charlotte. "it's a matrimonial expedition; those things are always secrets, you know."

"It will be a famous joke against Mr. Ashbrook, if he is."

"And where is Mr. Ashbrook?" asked Rosabel, who now, for the first time, missed him.

"Oh! he never comes down till eleven," replied Charlotte; "and I don't suppose it will break his heart to hear that his cousin is gone."

"What a difference between the two," remarked Mr. Spooner. "I never should suppose they were related."

"It would have been well if they had not been," thought Rosabel. She looked out, as the recollection of her long journey occurred to her. Her carriage was already at the door.

"It is of no use trying to persuade *you* to stay," said old Mrs. Spooner; "go you will—and you could not have a finer day."

"How tremendously hot it will be in London," observed Mr. Spooner—"I wonder you have resolution to encounter it. You had better stay with us, Rosabel:"

"No," replied Rosabel, in a decided tone; "I don't mind the heat, or any thing: I only want to be with my father again." She kissed little Howard—her parting tears wet the innocent forehead of the fair boy, already handsome, like his brothers—and, like his brothers, high-spirited and determined. "Howard, my boy, whenever you are tempted to do wrong, think of your father. In your merry hours, remember Rosabel. Farewell! love."

"—You know," she resumed, wiping the tears from her eyes, "I could not possibly stay another day, Mr. Spooner. My father is alone—Mr. Norman has left him now: so I long for this our last separation to terminate; for I shall never, never, leave him again."

"You are right," replied Mr. Spooner, kindly. "I wish Charlotte's maternal duties—"

"Oh!" interrupted Charlotte, "you know I cannot go this year, till both the children

have been inoculated ; but when I can take them with me—”

“ Thank you,” said Rosabel, hastily—a little angry at her ever consistent selfishness. “ I hope my father will not require your attentions from illness. For myself, to leave him would be no relief whatsoever. Farewell !” she embraced her sister, and touched with her cheek the cheek of Mrs. Spooner. Then, hanging for a moment over Howard, she gave Mr. Spooner her hand to conduct her to the carriage.

He regretted, as he led her through the hall, that his duties, as sheriff for the county that year, had prevented his arranging to accompany her to London ; but he added, kindly,

“ You may place entire dependance upon Harvey—he was my father’s valet, and travelling companion always ; and has been some five-and-twenty years in the family, if not more.”

Rosabel sprang into the chaise. Mr. Spooner stood for a few minutes, his hand on the door, remarking that travelling was much safer now, since the formation of new bodies of militia, and

the rise of military associations, than it had been for some years. At the same time, he mentioned that his servant was provided with pistols; and that he, on no account, recommended Rosabel to remain out in the evening later than six o'clock.

Rosabel smiled at his fears, but thanked him for his caution, and was glad when he thought proper to withdraw from the steps, and release her from the possibility of being detained. It was the month of June, and she thought it little probable that she should close her day's journey before eight o'clock on the two first evenings, by which means she should arrive earlier in London on the third day than Mr. Spooner had calculated: but, even with a certain degree of haste, which this arrangement would imply, her rate of travelling would seem very tedious in the present day, of which velocity in all things, even in legislation, is one grand feature. Rosabel congratulated herself upon her improvement in independance and good management of late, and was thankful that she was not haunted by the fears which possessed



her sister's mind and that of Mrs. Spooner, for they were both astonished at her temerity in venturing with the protection of servants only.

She set out in good spirits, and in total ignorance of the events which were ripening to a crisis in the metropolis. Old people still remember, with horror, the riots of 1780. These dark disastrous days of June—those scenes of tumult and consternation, of which the moving agent was a misguided, headstrong young man, whose mind had not compass enough to foresee the dangers and horrors to which he led the way.

By one of those casualties which all persons experience in the course of life, attending sometimes on events of importance, sometimes trifles, Rosabel left the shelter of Mr. Spooner's house on the very day after that on which the meteor of the day, the unfortunate Lord George Gordon, assembled, in St. George's Fields, a multitude, weak, as to individual importance, because chiefly composed of the lowest classes, but awful in its power when assembled in com-

pact strength, and led by the powerful impulse of fanatic rage ; by which the populace were ostensibly impelled. Composed of many little parts, it was the moving principle, the power of religious fury, which gave the mighty engine force. And the destruction to the metropolis was the greater, that as yet the designs of the mischievous, and the violence of the deluded, were concentrated within its bosom. The effects of bigotry which had blazed out in Scotland in the preceding year were for the time subdued, if not extinguished, and, at present, the contagion of a rebellious defiance to laws had not spread into the rural districts of England. The corn, still green, was waving in unusual luxuriance, as Rosabel travelled along—a smiling, and, to all appearance, a peaceful country. Here and there, she met bodies of troops, weary and hot, marching to some port or station, which the fear of invasion had, about this period, stimulated a tardy and disunited ministry to garrison: veteran regiments had been, partly with this view, ordered home from foreign service, and the young and

untried sent out to take their place. Rose thought of Colonel Ashbrook, as often, reconnoitring a number of sun-burnt and heated faces, some marked with many a scar. Her eye caught, at the last, a transient glance of the commanding officer, following on horse-back: and she wondered where he was, and for what service he had been so hastily and mysteriously summoned from Spooner Place; and it gave a zest and interest to her journey, of which she marked not the source, to trace the operations of military movements; now all a-tir in every country town and village through which she passed.

She journeyed on without interruption or delay; a profusion of Nature's gifts greeted her eye through the varied country over which she travelled. Calm agricultural pursuits went on as usual; the hay harvest had, in many places commenced; and the fields were animated by groups of peasantry, happy in the occupation most natural to their condition. No one, who contemplated those peaceful scenes, could have guessed that in the heart of the

metropolis riot and devastation had already begun.

On the third day of her travels, Rosabel began to experience that longing to terminate them which suddenly comes on us when we are near the termination of a journey. The drum and fife of the recruiting serjeant—in the hamlet, or the borough—were heard no longer, as she drew near the metropolis ; but were exchanged for the warlike features presented by small bodies of well-disciplined troops, quartered at different stations ; portions of that standing force of which the opposition members of parliament complained so loudly, and which was soon found to be ineffectual, or, at any rate, ineffectually applied, in stemming the destructive torrent of popular fury.

On the afternoon of the 4th of June, Rosabel found herself within thirty miles of London. Detachments of soldiers seemed now advancing, by hasty marches, to the capital ; and the scene wore no longer the aspect of peace, or of calm occupation. Many travelling carriages, heavily laden with luggage, were hurrying

away from London, as fast as they could find horses to take them on. This circumstance occasioned Rosabel, for the first time, a delay in her progress, which gave her the more uneasiness, as it was late in the afternoon when it occurred: and it was six o'clock in the evening when she arrived at Staines. Here she ordered fresh horses immediately, notwithstanding the counsel, respectfully offered by Mr. Spooner's servant, that she would not venture to proceed to London so late in the evening.

Resolute, however, in her purpose, Rosabel awaited in the inn till fresh horses were harnessed. She took up a newspaper which lay upon the table; it was a three-days' paper, and contained an account of the meeting in St. George's Fields on the Friday preceding; the day before Rosabel had left Spooner Place. It entered into a hurried, and perhaps exaggerated, detail of the outrages which had succeeded the presentation of that petition against Popery which Lord George Gordon had presented to the House of Commons—that mis-

guided nobleman coupling the performance of the office to which he was deputed with proceedings as unprecedented as they were fatal. His first act of folly was to enter the House with a blue cockade, the distinguishing mark of his party, in his hat ; but, upon this symbol exciting just reprehension, he pulled it out. Meantime, the Parliament House was wholly surrounded by the petitioners, computed to amount to a hundred thousand ; and a general shout of triumph announced their presence to the startled, but not intimidated, members within. At the door of the House, insults had been heaped upon several bishops and noblemen : one of whom, Lord Boston, remained so long in the hands of the mob, that the peers gallantly proposed to go out in a body to his rescue ; a project which was rendered unnecessary by the strange spectacle of the unlucky nobleman's escaping into the House, unwigged, and with his clothes nearly torn off.

The business of the day, in both houses, as the account further stated, had given place to discussions upon the appalling state of affairs ;

and when the confusion and panic had in some degree subsided, Lord George moved that the Protestant Petition should be introduced, and immediately brought up. A mode of proceeding so unprecedented was still, amid the shouts of the threatening multitude without, disputed; and Lord George was called upon to disperse his followers. In the course of repeated altercations with this misguided young man, the expostulation of Colonel Murray, a near relative of his lordship's, was uttered in vain. "My Lord George," said this gentleman, "do you intend to bring your rascally adherents into the House of Commons? If you do, the first man that enters, I will plunge my sword not into his body, but *yours*."

Rosabel read these paragraphs with breathless haste; they were concluded with a brief notice, that upon the arrival of a body of horse and foot, about nine o'clock at night, the rioters had been dispersed. She laid down the paper, satisfied, or resolved to be satisfied, that there the history ended. Not all the powers on earth could now, she thought, arrest her progress to

this metropolis—"and surely," she thought, "I am too insignificant to meet with any obstacles—we shall pass quietly enough."

She looked out into the stable-yard, into which the window of her apartment opened, and saw that the horses were now slowly led out.

She gave another glance at the newspaper. An old acquaintance of her father's, a member of the Commons, she saw, had even been obliged by the mob to take refuge in Westminster Hall; where the infuriated populace had followed him, broken the windows, and had been with difficulty expelled.

"I am thankful, very thankful," thought Rosabel, "that my father is not now in the House of Commons; our very misfortunes, which have precluded *that*, have perhaps saved him;" and, with this grateful reflection, she stepped into her carriage.

The sun was declining when Rosabel reached Hounslow. Here she heard the appalling intelligence that the Catholic chapels had been destroyed, and the reliques of the havoc burned in the fields, at that time adjacent to Lord George



Gordon's House, in Welbeck Street. "A London is on fire," added the landlord of the George Inn, in which parties of soldiers, on the march to the metropolis, were drinking and smoking. "It is impossible that you can go on."

—"On Friday night," he continued, "they destroyed the Popish chapels; for not above six or seven hundred of the mob, really, cared about the petition: these quietly retired, but the rest of the rioters collected again about eleven o'clock—and that has been going on every night since."

"—But what can you expect," said the landlady, "when Lord George himself harangued the mob from the gallery of the Commons' House? There is no knowing what such a man will do; you surely cannot go on, Madam."

Rosabel turned very pale, and sat down for a moment.

"And the soldiers," resumed the landlord, "do nothing but look on, so far as I hear—"

"And the magistrates still less—"

"There has been nothing so bad known

since the fire of London ; so I heard from a gentleman who has just come down by the mail."

" But, perhaps," said Rosabel, hesitatingly, " the disturbances are not near the part of the town where my family live. I am not afraid—I shall go on to-night—be so good as to order the carriage to be brought round."

" Do you know whether any private houses have been attacked ?" she resumed, again addressing the landlord."

" Lord Hyde's house has been burned down—to a certainty," answered her informant.

" Gracious me !" exclaimed Rosabel's female attendant, " that is Leicester Fields, close to our house."

" Surely, madam," said Mr. Spooner's butler, respectfully, " you will not think of going forward to-night ?"

" Poor young lady, she is quite upset," said the landlady.

Rosabel, at this speech, recovered her self-possession : hers was a character to rise with the exigencies of the moment. She had a wo-

man's softness and delicacy, with, when events called it forth, the heroism of the stronger sex. And she now saw that that must be exerted to urge those forward who had not the motives for encountering danger which she possessed.

"Order the carriage!" she said in a decided tone.—"What!" she added, "is not my father in London?"

"She will have her own way, I know," whispered her maid to the affrighted butler. "We must go on."

The carriage was once more in readiness. Rosabel getting into it quickly, as one who will not hesitate—who will not reflect; it drove on, and she found herself on the road, beyond the glimmering of lights, or the sounds of population. The night was dark, and, in those days, the dangerous approach to London was almost unguarded. The carriage passed over the heath: but, for once, over its gloomy flat, passengers were safe. The high-bred highwayman might suspend his labours for that evening; for few persons were likely to issue at a late hour out of London that night; still

fewer to venture, after sunset, into the metropolis. The less refined and less renowned votaries of pillage were all attracted to the very vortex of plunder—the centre of riot, inebriation, and debauchery.

The travellers passed on, therefore, unmolested, although uncheered by the “good-night” of the horse-patrole, which now breaks upon the nocturnal silence of the environs of London, imparting a sense of security, in these days, not fallacious. They went forward, therefore, unheeded—Rosabel’s maid gaining courage from the portentous tranquillity of the scene: the man-servant cautiously reserving his opinion, even to his companion outside, the post-boy, until events should prove the value of his cautions: Rosabel in a state of restless anxiety which baffles all description; for she was not insensible to the dangers of a licentious multitude—to the horrors of wanton destruction; her imagination could fully supply what her experience could not furnish. She was extremely accessible, like most women, to the influence of personal fear; she had been nur-

tured in seclusion, and in all the delicacy of domestic privacy : but an influence upheld her stronger than self-preservation—a new apprehension urged her forward, more powerful than that of her own safety. She sat erect, immoveable, determined ; her eye fixed upon the obscure space before her ; which, after a while, began to be enlivened with lights, and peopled, to speak metaphorically, with forms, denoting the approach to a populous, and, at this time, a devoted city.

Her calmness reassured her companion ; and, at the same time, gave the signal for taciturnity on her part. In total stillness, therefore, they passed onwards. By and bye Rosabel's ear caught sounds of voices ;—not merely the hum of men, but distinct shouts, and even yells, which broke upon the silence of night, then died away again.

Her heart sank within her ; and she began to question herself, if the accounts which she had heard were not exaggerated—if the populace were still assembled—how she might pass the assembled multitude—whether persons

so humble and unknown might hope to escape the outrages — she trembled at the word— which the infuriated mob had inflicted upon others that very day, as the landlord of the George had told her, in addition to his other alarming statements, meant to detain her— that same afternoon, Lord Sandwich had been wounded in his coach, and the carriage demolished.

Just then, her own conveyance stopped ; and the servant, putting his head down to the front window, which was open, said—

“ See there, Miss Fortescue !” pointing forward—“ it is impossible to go on.”

Rosabel stretched her head out. Above the total darkness in which the great city was comparatively enveloped, the heavens were tinged with a dark-red, settled hue, into which, at intervals, volumes of light sparks were thrown up, even into the undisturbed azure of the sky above—awful symptoms of some fearful conflagration, at once long-continued, and still blazing in all its uncontrollable, appalling fury.

"— It is Newgate !" said the man at the toll-gate, which they had now just reached ; " it has been burning some hours."

Rosabel leaned out towards the speaker.—  
" Can you tell me," said she to the man, " if it be true that Lord Hyde's house is burned down, in Leicester Fields ?—does much danger lie that way ?"

The light from the toll-house glared upon her face ; an observing eye might have marked, with compassion, the alarm, and sickening, writhing anxiety upon her ever-speaking countenance.

" Lord Hyde's house has been down these two hours," replied the gate-keeper ; " and they say the mob are drunk already with the wine in his cellars, and that every house in the Fields will be destroyed."

Rosabel sank back in the carriage. The man-servant awaited her orders.

" Go on !" she said, in a firm, but hollow tone.—" I must see my father !"

" God of Heaven !" she muttered to herself,

“protect his grey hairs from insult, his revered form from outrage!—Oh, my father!—why did we part?”

“I hope Sir John will leave the place—that he will but stay quiet somewhere,” said the maid, who knew the family well; “but he’s a man of such spirit, he’ll brave it out, I’m afraid.”

“They could not harm him—they dare not,” cried Rosabel, in agony; “but, oh! he’s an infirm, weak old man now, and none of his children near to save him!”

In a moment or two, she overcame, such was the native strength of her character, this weakness.

“God is ever with him,” she reflected—“why is it that that thought does not, as it should, sustain me now?”

By this time the carriage had reached Hyde Park Corner, then the entrance of Piccadilly. And now, the sounds of gun-shot at a distance, the shouts of popular vengeance, the screams of inebriated women of the lowest (and, alas! what can be lower?) of the lowest class, broke



at intervals upon the ear, amid the total silence and apparent desertion of the immediate vicinity of the two parks.

“ They are many of them at the other end of the town,” said the man at Hyde Park turnpike. “ You may go in safety as far as the middle of Piccadilly ; and, after that—” he shook his head.

The military were riding in small parties up and down the street—a few straggling, drunken persons were alone seen here ; for it was one of the most awful features of these tremendous riots, that the forces of the populace appeared to be organized, and were generally concentrated in the work of destruction. Many believed that the multitude were secretly instigated by persons of influence and condition, even by some of the nobility ; but of this there appears to have been but little proof.

This day had, in the metropolis, exceeded the two preceding in the work of destruction, and its details vie in horror with those of the succeeding Wednesday, still noted in the annals of this country as excelling, in dismay and per-

sonal distress, any previous epoch; and when Rosabel entered London, the mob were not satiated with destruction, although more than twenty private houses had fallen under their assaults that day. In the midst of these tumults, Lord George Gordon had been drawn home by the people in his carriage, after the adjournment of the House of Commons;—offering, whilst thus hailed by the populace, an exhortation to disperse quietly—a counsel which came too late.

Rosabel passed, without molestation, into the middle of Piccadilly, at once terrified by the appearance, and reassured by the protection, of small parties of the military, who were indeed but scantily supplied, and feebly organized; for a moral paralysis appeared in this extremity to have seized the civil and military authorities—the arm of justice delayed to strike, till it could no longer protect innocence—it could only inflict vengeance. At the present hour, as Rosabel had gleaned on her way, the gaols were the objects which drew off a large proportion of the rioters in their attack. Newgate was

man's softness and delicacy, with, when ever it called it forth, the heroism of the stronger sex. And she now saw that that must be exerted to urge those forward who had not the motives for encountering danger which she possessed.

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"She will have her own way, I know," whispered her maid to the affrighted butler. "We must go on."

The carriage was once more in readiness. Rosabel getting into it quickly, as one who will not hesitate—who will not reflect: it drove on, and she found herself on the road, beyond the glimmering of lights, or the sounds of population. The night was dark, and, in those days, the dangerous approach to London was almost unguarded. The carriage passed over the heath: but, for once, over its gloomy flat, passengers were safe. The high-bred highwayman might suspend his labours for that evening; for few persons were likely to issue at a late hour out of London that night: still

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The travellers passed on, therefore, unmolested, although uncheered by the “good-night” of the horse-patrole, which now breaks upon the nocturnal silence of the environs of London, imparting a sense of security, in these days, not fallacious. They went forward, therefore, unheeded—Rosabel’s maid gaining courage from the portentous tranquillity of the scene: the man-servant cautiously reserving his opinion, even to his companion outside, the post-boy, until events should prove the value of his cautions: Rosabel in a state of restless anxiety which baffles all description; for she was not insensible to the dangers of a licentious multitude—to the horrors of wanton destruction; her imagination could fully supply what her experience could not furnish. She was extremely accessible, like most women, to the influence of personal fear; she had been nur-

were distinctly visible as Rosabel approached it: the hand pointed to the hour of nine. The streets were blocked up with persons, many in a state of inebriation; for the wine cellars of the rich and the great had been ransacked, and their contents, in some instances, poured into the streets. The pavement was crowded with porters carrying furniture to places of safety, for the houses burned were first gutted, and all effects set out in the streets for safety or plunder, as it might happen. In many instances, the article attempted to be saved was left to be trampled under foot, or carried away by the pillager, ever on the watch; the owner preferring to save his life, and to leave his property. An intense heat prevailed; not the natural, relaxing warmth of a summer's evening, but the blast of many furnaces: the heat which not only warms, but fevers. The parched lip sought a breath of fresh air in vain: volumes of smoke, carried aloft, filled the air with particles of soot; a sense of suffocation impeded the breathing; the eye in vain looked above for comfort: the very heavens seemed inflamed. The merciful

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their prey. The furniture was burned in piles: the library, consisting of many thousands of volumes, rare manuscripts, the splendid collection of pictures, had been committed to the flames in the presence of several hundred soldiery; the Lord Chief Justice looking on, calmly sustaining this irreparable loss, rather than permit the slaughter of the destroyers by the fire of the military.

For a while, the yells, the shouts, were silenced; and then Rosabel, awe-struck, blockaded in her carriage, heard the report of musquetry;—distant platoons from the water side, or from the bridges, where the tumult was the greatest, re-echoed, as it were, the dread shouts; and, for a time, all other sounds were hushed.

The carriage passed on again without molestation, until the crowd, thickening, it was again arrested in its progress. A general sentiment of enmity prevailed towards all who were of the aristocracy, whether Protestant or Catholic; and no carriage was, that night, allowed to pass unmolested.

"Have them out!" cried the coarse voices of the mob—"have them out—break the carriage to pieces!"—was echoed by a thousand voices. Rosabel's female attendant fainted with terror.

"Miss Fortescue," said the man-servant, from without, "it is impossible that we can go on; if I speak the people fair, they may let us pass into Bond Street, and we may return, through Berkeley Square, to the outskirts: we cannot reach Leicester Fields to-night."

"But, my father!" cried Rosabel—"Oh, God! I must go on—I must see him!"

The carriage was finally hemmed in. No military were in view. In Coventry Street, indeed, a glimpse might be seen of a skirmish between a party of soldiers and some rioters—the noise on all sides was deafening. The glare of light revealed, too truly, all the horrors of the scene.

"Have them out—open the carriage doors!"—were sounds which again greeted Rosabel's ears. A piercing scream broke from her—she felt as if her senses were leaving her; but her



father—the deserted old man—that thought again aroused her. Her wonted courage returned. She leaned her head out of the window ; nothing but a dense mass of human beings met her view : many of these were spectators, merely drawn thither by what proved to them, fatal curiosity.

Rosabel resumed her quiescent posture ; and, in a few minutes, fresh sounds greeted her ears——“ The distillery—the distillery !” was shouted on all sides.——“ To Holborn—Holborn is on fire !”——The crowd pressed on—a new object, a fresh spectacle, was prepared for their entertainment;—and they pressed on to their destruction—many of them perishing that night and the following day, from drinking the newly rectified spirits, at the celebrated distillery in Holborn, of which the gutters ran down with ardent spirits.

In a quarter of an hour, the streets westward of Leicester Fields were thinned, nearly cleared. The new prison at Clerkenwell, the Fleet, King’s Bench, Bridewell, the toll-gates at Blackfriars, were all marked out for des-

truction ; and were so many objects of savage attraction. The whole of the city seemed, from afar off, to be in flames ; no less than thirty-six fires being seen to rage at once, “ hastening,” as a looker-on observed, “ to meet each other.” Rosabel’s progress towards home was slow, but uninterrupted. Her heart throbbed, almost to breaking, as she found herself in Coventry Street, then turned into Princes Street, and passed into Leicester Fields, then the residence of the great ;—and, until lately, of the widowed Princess of Wales. Hysterical sobs broke from her, when she saw her own home. It was safe—dark, closed—was her father safe too ?—should she find him at home awaiting her ?

The Square was still crowded ; and, at one extremity, still burned the remains of Lord Hyde’s once proud residence. No aid of engines to check the conflagration could, of course, be resorted to. The house was hopelessly resigned to plunder : the furniture had been flung, by the rioters, into the Square,

where fires were made to destroy it. Complete illumination reigned. Lights had been hastily stuck into every window and entry; and flags were hung out, inscribed with the words "No Popery!" intended to deprecate the wrath of the incendiaries. Sir John Fortescue's house, alone, displayed not this contrivance.

## CHAPTER XXI.

—————" Bent on vacancy, her eye  
 All tearless ; mute and motionless she stood,  
 Like the pale marble image of Despair."

ANON.

MR. SPOONER'S servant, almost paralyzed by fear as he was, knocked twice at Sir John Fortescue's door before the signal was answered. The door was at length half opened, the chain still kept up across it, and an af-frighted domestic put his head out. Rosabel was already on the steps : she could hardly utter the words—" Is my father at home, and safe—is he well ?"

The man stared at her, without reply.

" Undo the chain !" she cried, vehemently ; and, as he complied with her orders, she passed him, and ran into the back parlour ; used, as she supposed, by her father as a study.

A candle, burnt down, was still alight in the apartment ; but all was silent and deserted.

“ Where is Sir John ?—is he up stairs ?” cried Rosabel, shaking from head to foot, to the servant who followed her.

“ Sir John, Miss Rosabel—Sir John is gone out, afoot ; he expected you all day.”

“ Hush !” said the maid-servant, “ she is fainting.”

“ No,” said Rosabel, recollecting herself. “ If you will tell me that he is safe,” she added, wildly, “ then I will be satisfied.—Why do you not tell me that he is safe ?—Cannot you tell me at once that he is safe ?”

“ Sir John will be back soon,” said the man, soothingly : “ he has been disturbed about you all day, Miss Fortescue, and sent off a messenger to Hounslow, to prevent you coming in.”

“ Where is he gone—which way ? Can we not seek him—can we not find him ?” cried Rosabel, passionately ; her reason disordered by what she had gone through—her faculties impaired by the miseries of suspense.

The servant tried to convince her it would

be impossible. Sir John had taken no alarm with respect to the tumults until late in the afternoon. He had kept within doors, and charged his servants to do the same. Towards the afternoon, when accounts were brought of fresh outrages, he had become uneasy, and had expressed regret that he had not written the day before, to prevent his daughter's arrival in town. Then a man on horseback was sent off to enforce her sleeping that night at Hounslow. When Lord Hyde's house was attacked, Sir John was pressed by his servants to hang out the badge 'No Popery;' but he refused; and also, declined to illuminate.

From no motive of personal safety would he lend his aid to kindle the firebrand of savage bigotry, which disgraced the Protestant cause. "They may burn my house," said the conscientious Sir John: "it contains nothing that I value so much, as to lend my name to a bad cause. My children are safe. With respect to my own life, if it be to be redeemed by baseness, it were better lost." By night-fall, however, he had become uneasy; not that he

was appalled, so much as afflicted by the scenes that were enacted around him ;—but that his messenger was not returned.

By eight o'clock, hearing no news, he felt sure that Rosabel would be on her way; and, no conveyance being in the way, or by any possibility to be procured, the anxious father set forth to walk, but forbade any one to accompany him.

“ No,” said he to his servant; “ your attendance will not ensure my safety, and I have no right to risk *your* life.”

He had gone to Piccadilly, thinking to watch the few carriages which were likely to come into town that night, and to conduct his daughter in safety. “ Had not Miss Rosabel chanced to see him? It was strange.” The man, secluded all day, spoke in ignorance of the occurrences of the evening.

Rosabel strove to answer, but could not articulate. Just then the spot where they stood became suddenly illuminated—a fearful gleam of light shewing distinctly every object. Rosabel screamed—“ Oh, God! what is that?”

as one of the fires near her home blazed up, and then sank, leaving the house again in darkness.

The sound of a discharge of musquetry was heard. The assembled group stood awe-struck ;—Rosabel was obliged to hold by the banister. The horrors of personal fear had succeeded to the anxiety of filial affection of so devoted a kind, that her own life was of slight value in her eyes, when compared with the safety of that revered parent, whose grey hairs had already been nigh brought down to the grave:—but now, the weakness of human nature, the infirmity of the flesh, as in Scripture it is expressively denoted, came upon her. She stood, in the darkness of her own deserted home, amid those even more affrighted than herself. About, around, were sounds of carnage and destruction ; for a time, she trembled for herself ; but her father—the good, the stout-hearted Sir John, fearless for her sake, gone forth to seek her—at that moment risking for her his life—

“—They will kill him,” she cried, with a



shriek, which echoed through the hall, as a fresh discharge of musquetry was heard—"he will be shot, wounded, crushed among the falling houses—Oh! George!" she clasped her hands in supplicating attitude as she spoke, addressing her own servant—"George, you have lived long in his service, do you go and seek him, for my sake, for his—I beg you. George, I pray—I will go down on my knees to you—I will give you all I have—I will stay here, and Mary and you," she added, turning to the other servant. "Oh, bring my father home safe, and you shall never want!"

"—*I* am not afraid," she added, wildly, as the two domestics—more cool, and more prudent—demurred. "Well then, George, do you go first—search for him along Piccadilly: there, perhaps, he may be looking for me—and, oh! bring him to me, George. You will see him—you will find him; it is light, quite light—and you will know *him*, surely, among the common people. Oh! were he once at home again. My father! oh! my father—there, go, go—Oh! do not wait to consider!—go—will money

do any thing?—take it all; but bring him, bring him home!”

The servant departed—for who could resist such a prayer?—and Rosabel and her two companions were left standing in the hall. Extremity banishes distinctions—she grasped Mary’s arm, and felt comforted to feel some human being close to her. They sat down on the stairs; for a while all was silent;—then a distant shout swelled and approached. The words of “No Popery,” the watch-word of destruction, came nearer and nearer. Leicester Fields was the abode of several leading characters in both Houses of Parliament. Sir George Saville’s house, situated in it, had first fallen a sacrifice to popular fury.

Rosabel stood long, listening, and trying in vain, amid the deafening yells which at times were heard, to catch the sounds of her father’s well-known knock. He came not;—and, in agony, she sent the other servant, an unwilling messenger, to reconnoitre the immediate neighbourhood.

There were now none but females in the

house. A little congregation of scared damsels collected round their kind young mistress, and strove to mitigate her distress by their humble consolation; for *they* happened to have no immediate friends or relatives among the crowd. They volunteered several particulars of the day's disasters. Sir John, they said, had been very agitated and restless all the evening:—in and out, up and down, until the crowds were such, that all egress was impossible: “and he had the worst opinion,” the housekeeper added, “of what this must all come to; for, if the Bank was gained, which would doubtless be attempted next day, it was all over with the country.” Rosabel could not listen to them: every mention of her father's name made her heart throb even to bursting: she withdrew into his study, to combat, in private, with her gathering apprehensions; to collect her spirits, if she could, for scenes of danger and of horror, which an instinctive feeling told her were as yet but begun. The room she had chosen, was not favorable for the recovery of her fortitude—there, every thing spoke to